

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Changed Status of Several Species of Waterfowl in Alaska.—Waterfowl technicians have long recognized that during periods of severe drought in the Canadian prairie provinces ducks move farther north to seek a favorable environment. How far beyond their normal range various species will travel and how successfully they might produce young under displaced circumstances has been a matter of conjecture. In the summers of 1957, 1958, and 1959 biologists studying waterfowl production made several observations bearing on this question near Tetlin, Alaska (63° N, 142° 30' W), and on the Copper River Delta (60° 30' N, 145° 30' W).

Anas discors. Blue-winged Teal. This teal has been reported infrequently since the earliest days of ornithological work in Alaska, but a specimen had not been collected and preserved to verify the reports until September 4, 1952. On that date James W. Brooks collected two near Fairbanks, one of which was an immature female. Since then they have been checked in hunters' bags and reported occasionally by other observers from widely scattered points in Alaska. Only one breeding record had been established to date, however. Bob L. Burkholder observed an adult with two ducklings on July 13, 1949, near Palmer in the Matanuska Valley (Kessel, Condor, 57, 1955:372-373).

A banding station has been operative in the Tetlin area since 1955 and an intensive production study since 1957. Blue-winged Teal were not reported there until 1958 when six were sighted. In 1959 they were common. Sixteen broods were observed of which a complete count was obtained on 12 for an average brood size of 7.2. This compares favorably with brood size of Blue-winged Teal within their optimum range. In addition to 25 banded and released, two adult and one flightless young were collected for specimens and deposited in the University of Alaska Museum and the United States National Museum, Washington, D.C. Blue-winged Teal were observed and checked frequently in hunters' bags in September of 1959 as far west in Alaska as the Fairbanks area and along the coast of southeastern Alaska. These cumulative observations would indicate that, in some years at least, the Blue-winged Teal is a rather common summer resident locally.

Aythya americana. Redhead. Gabrielson and Lincoln (Birds of Alaska, 1959:177) state that "The inclusion of the Redhead in the avifauna of Alaska is upon limited evidence." The few reports are from sight records at Kodiak and in the Aleutian Islands. The most recent report was by Murie in 1936 from Amukta Island in the Aleutians.

On May 23, 1959, John Hakala observed a pair of Redheads on the Kenai National Moose Range. During the week prior to May 20, 1959, Peter Shepherd and Charles Trainer, working on the Copper River Delta near Cordova, observed a pair of Redheads on several occasions in company with a male Canvasback. From the middle of June through the summer, Redheads were observed regularly in the Tetlin area. Of 71 trapped, two were flightless young from different broods. Another brood of three was sighted but not caught. Seven Redheads, including the two young, were saved for study skins and deposited with the University of Alaska and the National Museum. Sixty-four were banded and released. Among those trapped on August 1, 1959, was a female which had been banded as an adult near Ardmore, Oklahoma, on March 30, 1953.

Aythya collaris. Ring-necked Duck. With but one exception the few records of the Ring-necked Duck have come from on or near the coastal islands of Alaska, from southeastern areas to the Aleutians. The exception was a specimen taken near Fairbanks on August 7, 1953.

Adult Ring-necks have been sighted in limited numbers each summer since 1957 in the Tetlin area and a few have been trapped and banded. An adult male was collected for the University of Alaska Museum in August of 1958 and another adult male on August 29, 1959. On September 5, 1958, near Napakiak, Alaska, on the lower Kuskokwim River a banded duck mistakenly reported as a Lesser Scaup was taken in a fish net. This duck had been banded as an adult male Ring-neck near Akron, Ohio, on April 4, 1957. This, then, definitely extends the distribution of the Ring-necked Duck across interior Alaska from the Bering Sea to the Canadian border, although nowhere within this range has it yet been identified as a breeding species.

Aythya valisineria. Canvasback. Gabrielson and Lincoln (*op. cit.*:180) state that "The Canvasback is uncommon in Alaska, and the only unquestioned breeding records are from the Yukon Valley," following which, they list several sight records of both adults and broods at widely scattered points in Alaska.

Since 1955 Canvasbacks have been recorded regularly on the aerial breeding population survey

in east-central Alaska; that is, at Ft. Yukon Flats, Minto Lakes, and Tetlin. In recent years they have become quite abundant in this restricted range and have spread over a much larger area than formerly. In 1959 Canvasbacks were seen frequently from the lower Kuskokwim River up the Bering Sea coast north to Kotzebue Sound and all across interior Alaska to the Canadian border. Of nine nests under observation on the Copper River Delta, seven hatched with an average brood size of 5.8 young. Canvasbacks were more abundant in the Tetlin area than in any previous year. Two flocks of more than 1500 each were observed there on Butterfly and Old Albert lakes, from which 309 were banded. These were largely flightless adult males, but in addition 32 broods were tabulated. These observations of recent years indicate that the Canvasback is a common summer resident in much of Alaska and is abundant in some areas.

Oxyura jamaicensis. Ruddy Duck. The only previous record for the Ruddy Duck in Alaska was on August 15, 1916, at Totem Bay near Petersburg when two were seen and a male was collected (Gabrielson and Lincoln, *op. cit.*:239).

On June 1, 1957, Dan Rose took a Kodachrome picture of a pair of Ruddies near the airstrip at Northway, Alaska, about 25 miles east of Tetlin. On several occasions in the summer of 1959 a few Ruddy Ducks were observed near Tetlin. On August 19 an adult female was taken in the banding trap and saved for a study skin. On August 25 in a different lake system a female and brood of five downy young were observed. One of the young, a male, was collected the following day and subsequently sent to the United States National Museum with the adult female collected earlier. This constitutes the farthest northwest record for the Ruddy and the first breeding record for Alaska.

A drought in the north-central United States and the prairie provinces of Canada became very acute in 1959. As shown by the aerial breeding population surveys, species of waterfowl that are primarily prairie nesting were much more abundant generally in Alaska and the Northwest Territories than in the previous ten years. The present drought, however, is the most severe and extensive of any experienced since aerial surveys have been made in the far north. It is reasonable to assume, then, that the occurrence of these species in Alaska in 1959 is not necessarily unique. Undoubtedly in former droughts of equal or greater severity the range of several species was extended this far but nobody was on hand to record the phenomenon. Or perhaps some of the early, doubted records were made during years of climatic conditions in the south paralleling those of 1959 and absence in the interval between has led to discrediting of the earlier observations.

The most significant and intriguing feature of this "extension of range" is the fact that the stable Arctic and sub-Arctic regions may be an effective reservoir for displaced waterfowl during adverse times in their normal range.—HENRY A. HANSEN, *Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Juneau, Alaska, October 30, 1959.*

Behavioral and Ecologic Notes on the Brown-headed Cowbird.—On August 14, 1958, on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, California, I watched for one-half hour an adult female Oregon Junco (*Junco oreganus*) repeatedly feed an almost fully-grown, juvenal-plumaged Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). The young cowbird persistently postured in food-begging display: wings raised and fluttering, bill agape, with a continual *zweet!* note given at a rate of six or seven each five seconds. It is likely this young cowbird was one actually reared by the junco, not merely one that had "adopted" the junco after having been fledged; the support for this inference lies in the length of time the bond persisted between the two birds, in spite of some insistent disturbance of the birds on my part. Friedmann (*The Cowbirds*, 1929:279) remarked that the bond between a fledged juvenile cowbird and a temporarily adopted foster parent is exceedingly loose.

This particular juvenile was of interest in that it uttered notes of alarm or anxiety, a phenomenon unknown to Friedmann (1929:273) but apparently of some frequency in cowbirds in Texas (Robert K. Selander, personal communication). Whenever I approached the birds, which were mostly active on the ground, they flushed into nearby small trees; the cowbird always flushed first and gave sharp, clear alarm notes of high frequency: *pip-pip-pip*. The notes had the quality and phrasing of many emberizine alarm notes and were unlike any notes from cowbirds I have otherwise heard or found described. This is not to imply the cowbird mimicked the notes of the junco, for the alarm notes of the attendant junco were of higher frequency and of different phrasing, as: *titiit, titiit*.

In passing it may be noted that the Oregon Juncos of west-central California (*J. o. pinosus*) seem not heretofore to have been recorded as hosts of Brown-headed Cowbirds (Friedmann, 1929; Auk, 48,