

Notes

Manx Shearwater: The Possible First Ontario Record?

David Brewer

The Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) breeds mainly in the eastern Atlantic, from Iceland and the British Isles south through France to the Azores and Madeira, with recent records in New England and Newfoundland. After breeding, the western European population winters mainly in the southwestern Atlantic, off the coasts of Brazil and Argentina, although significant numbers do occur off the eastern seaboard of Canada and the United States, with occasional sight records in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Harrison 1983, Godfrey 1986). So far, there have been seven recoveries of birds banded in the British Isles in North America, mostly on the east coast of the United States (British Trust for Ornithology website: www.bto.org/ringing/recoveries.html).

On 19 August 2000, an adult male Manx Shearwater was found in a weakened condition in Armada Township, Macomb County, Michigan (42° 53' N, 82° 57' W), a location about 35 km west of the St. Clair River, essentially due north of Windsor and southwest of Sarnia. The bird, which was in grossly emaciated condition, was taken into

care at the Detroit Zoo, but died on 24 August. The specimen is now in the collection at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. The bird had been banded (ER33263) as a nestling on Copeland Island, County Down, Northern Ireland, on 7 September 1991, and was thus nine years old.

Although it will clearly always be an unprovable hypothesis, given the location of the recovery, it is very difficult to see how ER33263 could possibly have gotten to Armada Township without passing through Ontario or Ontario waters. The state of emaciation is, of course, consistent with the conditions of other oceanic tubenoses which have been found on the Great Lakes—for example, specimens from the 1996 invasion of Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*).

Nevertheless, we are left with the intriguing notion that if observers at Point Pelee or Kettle Point had been a little bit more lucky, we might have had this new species for the province one year earlier than the official first record, a female found dead at Ottawa on 26 August 2001 (Roy 2002).

Acknowledgements

I thank Dr. Bernard Zonfrillo of the University of Glasgow for having brought this recovery to my attention, and Janet Hinshaw of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology for providing further details of this occurrence.

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An Unusual, Late, Second Nest by a Canada Goose

Ken Abraham

In mid-September 2001, Bob and Maureen Jones of Kinmount, Ontario, contacted Gerald Moraal at the Minden Area office of the Ministry of Natural Resources to report a Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) that was nesting on their property. Because a September nest seemed very unusual, Moraal contacted me to ask whether I was interested in following up the contact. On 26 September 2001, I visited the Jones property with Gerald Moraal to document the nest. We were met by Bob and Maureen and taken to view "Baby" (as they had named the female goose) who was sitting on her nest on a straw bale in a loft of an otherwise inactive barn, adjacent to a pond. The goose obviously was familiar with Bob, who regularly visited her, and even with strangers in attendance, she allowed him to reach beneath her and gently raise her off the eggs. She was incubating a clutch of seven eggs. While a September nest itself is extremely unusual, what makes this nesting attempt even more unusual is that Bob indicated it was her second nest in 2001 and that her first attempt in spring was successful! The full history of the goose, as recounted by Bob, is described below.

In 1989, Bob was working in Toronto near the Lakeview Generating Station on the waterfront when he encountered a brood of five day-old goslings covered with oil. He brought them to his rural Kinmount property for rehabilitation and raised them in the company of some domestic geese on his farm pond. They reached flight capability and began to fly between the pond and the nearby Irondale River in the company of a wild flock of Canada Geese attracted to the pond and the other birds. They sometimes left for 2-3 days at a time but returned and resumed their usual familiar behaviours. They eventually left the farm for the winter, apparently with the wild flock. Four birds arrived at the Jones property in early March of 1990. Although none was banded, these were presumed to be surviving goslings based on their behaviour; upon arrival, they approached the back door, honking and unafraid, which strongly suggests they were the same birds raised by Bob and Maureen the previous summer. A variation on this behaviour still signals Baby's arrival every year. She lands, approaches, honks insistently, and on some occasions has even flown up to the

windowsill or walked in the back door when a response was not forthcoming.

In 1991, one female returned with a mate (which did not approach the house), but no nest was found that year. In 1992, as a three-year-old, she returned with a mate and nested near a well. A domestic Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*) harassed her and eventually drove her from the nest and the eggs were depredated. Each year from 1993 to 2002, she arrived in late February or early March and nested in the barn loft. Although she entered and exited under a closed door, none of the males has entered the barn, even when the door is opened. They take up various positions outside the barn and near the pond, and respond to calls from inside, to potential predators and also to Bob's approach. Male participation in raising the young has also been variable, perhaps not surprisingly. In some years, the male stays only about two weeks, but in others "he" has stayed to help raise the young. Bob estimates the female has actually had three different mates over the years, basing this on size (the second mate was very large), behaviour with respect to the barn, and behaviour with respect to Bob, including willingness to take food from him (only the current one seems inclined to do so).

In 2001, the pair arrived in early March and nested, producing seven eggs from which five goslings

hatched and survived to flight stage. One developed inverted wings, a condition known as paddle wing, apparently related to a diet imbalance (Harry Lumsden, pers. comm.) which rendered it unable to fly. The pair and four young left the property, but for 1-2 weeks after departure, the female would occasionally return with one young bird. Eventually, the young bird did not return but the female stayed on to produce this unusually late, second clutch of seven eggs. Candling showed the presence of air spaces, but no embryo development in any of the eggs; a single egg was removed and when opened showed no evidence of fertilization, but was not decomposing (the yolk was "fresh" and the albumen had some differentiation).


Discussion

This nesting attempt was unusual on two major counts, timing and laying history. Egg-laying in northern hemisphere wild geese occurs in spring following gonadal recrudescence, stimulated primarily by appropriate daylength. Species have different critical daylengths for reproduction, which stimulates reproductive tract development, but does not guarantee reproductive maturation on its own. Other factors such as temperature, rainfall, pairing behaviour, and nutrition also provide information necessary to bring the gonads to maturity (Bluhm 1992). I could find no other published records of

September nests of wild Canada Geese, but Bluhm (1992) cited records of captive swans laying between February and April, and then again in mid-September, when their critical daylength was repeated. This seems to have happened here. Among the other factors usually necessary for successful reproduction is pair bonding or at least presence of a mate. It does not appear from the account of events here that normal pairing behaviour occurred, as no mate was present for the second attempt. Finally, the availability of an assured and enriched food supply was likely a factor that over-compensated for absence of other factors, and in combination with appropriate

daylength may have allowed this laying to occur. Had the eggs hatched, it is unlikely that sufficient natural foods of appropriate quality would have been available to raise them, but with the assistance of Bob and Maureen Jones, they may have survived.


Female Canada Geese typically produce only a single clutch of eggs. The majority of them successfully incubate the eggs to hatching and subsequently are occupied with raising the goslings to flight stage. Successful birds rarely produce a second nest. Most anecdotal accounts of second nests suggest they are the product of an unsuccessful female continuing to lay, or laying again, after nest destruction. The propensity to do so, and the conditions that favour continuation nests versus true second nests are uncertain. The laying of a true second clutch by geese, sometimes called "re-nesting", is thought to be uncommon to rare (Alisauskas and Ankney 1992). Therefore, it is of interest to both ornithologists and goose managers, from the perspective of reproductive strategies and production potential, respectively. The term "re-nesting" does not differentiate between a true second nest (that is, a completely new reproductive effort involving a new set of developed follicles) or a continuation nest (the completion of laying of eggs from the original set of developed follicles). There is some suggestion that there is variation in the propensity to lay contin-



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uation nests, with lower latitude species or subspecies more likely to do so than higher latitude species or subspecies. A recent study of medium-sized Dusky Canada Geese (*B. c. occidentalis*) in the Copper River Delta, Alaska, used radio-marking and experimental removal of eggs at different stages throughout laying and incubation to determine the frequency and nature of second nesting. The results were that a rel-

atively high proportion of females whose eggs were depredated early in the reproductive cycle did indeed lay additional eggs in both continuation nests and some true second clutches.

Acknowledgements

I thank Gerald Moraal, and Bob and Maureen Jones for bringing this to my attention, their hospitality, and for sharing the history of Baby.

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