

## A RUDDY SHELDUCK SHOT IN PANOLA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

W. Marvin Davis

308 Lewis Lane  
Oxford, Mississippi 38655

On the morning of 8 January 1989, James Simmerman of Como, Mississippi, was waterfowl hunting with a companion at a "beaver pond" on Nelson Creek in northwestern Panola County. This tributary of the Little Tallahatchie River enters Sardis Lake about four miles above Sardis Dam. The hunters saw a single duck fly over their goose and duck decoys, circling twice before being shot by Simmerman. The bird called as it flew in a manner described as goose-like honking sounds. It was quickly noted to be of a species that they could not identify.

The duck was retrieved and later taken to taxidermist Tony Coy, of Batesville, Mississippi, who was also unable to identify it. Mr. Coy kept the frozen bird until 6 February, when he took it to the University of Mississippi Department of Biology, where Professor Paul Lago used Peterson (1980) and other references to identify it as a male Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*). I examined the bird and concurred in the identification.

The duck was obviously healthy, full-bodied and heavy, and with plumage in excellent condition. There was no evidence of wear on wing or tail feathers. The bird had no leg band, nor signs of having worn one. The black feet and legs were unmarked, showing no scars, sores, or calloused spots that might suggest captivity. Thus, in behavior and appearance there was nothing to distinguish the duck from a free-living, wild individual.

The Ruddy Shelduck is a Eurasian species that breeds in areas around the Mediterranean and eastward from Asia Minor through Afghanistan to Tibet. The American Ornithologists' Union (1983:780) notes that it "has been recorded casually as a stray in western Greenland" and that several records in the interior of North America (including Kentucky and Illinois) "most likely pertain to escapes from captivity." The Ruddy Shelduck is among those species of exotic waterfowl "common in zoos and private collections" in the United States (National Geographic Society 1987:90).

Photographs of the specimen taken prior to its being mounted have been deposited in the avian collections of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science and the Department of Biological Sciences at Mississippi State University.

Literature Cited

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1983. Check-list of North American birds. 6th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- National Geographic Society. 1987. Field guide to the birds of North America. 2nd ed. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.
- Peterson, R.T. 1980. A field guide to the birds. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Massachusetts.