

GENERAL NOTES

The Black Duck nesting on the outer coastal islands of Maine.¹—(Plate 26)
—In recent years the Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*) has been found breeding in increasing numbers on small islands located well out to sea along the coast of Maine. Many of these islands are without fresh-water pools and ponds which we are accustomed to associate with the nesting environment of the Black Duck. This bird, typical of the inland lakes and marshes, keeps strange company on these outer rocky islands where the only other inhabitants are the sea birds such as the gulls, guillemots, cormorants and eiders.

The nesting of the Black Duck on these islands is not always limited to isolated cases; for example, on June 2, 1944, on No Man's Land, a member of the Metinicus group of islands lying 15 miles out to sea from the mainland, we found two broods and also six nests with eggs of the Black Duck. This represents an unusual concentration for a bird which usually nests in inland places often remote from others of its kind.

The following nesting records were incidentally made while I was visiting the Herring Gull colonies along the Maine coast with representatives of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the purpose of conducting a control of this gull. The islands are arranged in order, beginning with those along the southwesternmost and continuing to those situated along the northeastern part of the coast. To assist the reader in finding the islands on a map, the approximate latitude and longitude are given.

Eagle Island. 43° 28.8' N., 70° 21.6' W.

On May 23, 1944, a nest containing nine eggs was found in a thick mass of grass and red-raspberry bushes growing in a narrow depression of this rocky island. There are no springs or fresh water pools of any kind on this island. The nest was situated about 50 feet inland from the high-tide mark of the shore. One of the eggs examined contained an embryo of about 15-days incubation.

Stratton Island. 43° 30.3' N., 70° 18.8' W.

There is an unoccupied dwelling on this island surrounded by a number of trees and shrubs. Much of the surface of this ten-acre island is covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, and near its center is a fresh-water pond bordered with cattails and tall marsh grass. On May 23, 1943, several Black Ducks were flushed from the pond, but no nests were located at that time. On May 23, 1944, we saw 12 Black Ducks with as many Blue-winged Teals on the pond. In the tall marsh grass about 20 feet from the edge of the pond was a Black Duck's nest with nine eggs. The embryo in one egg opened was about ten days old. I am confident that several pairs are breeding on Stratton Island.

Bluff Island. 43° 30.5' N., 70° 19.2' W.

Bluff Island is a dome-shaped island with its entire surface, inside the rocky shores and sea walls, grown up with tall timothy grass. There is no source of water on this island. Four adult Black Ducks were flushed from the dense grass on May 23, 1944. These birds gave every indication in their behavior that they were nesting, but unfortunately we had no opportunity to search for the well-concealed nests.

Ragged Island. 43° 43.6' N., 69° 56.3' W.

On June 3, 1941, a female Black Duck with a brood of eight young, about three or

¹ Contribution Number 15, Bowdoin-Kent Island Scientific Station, Kent Island, Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, Canada.



GROSS: BLACK DUCK IN MAINE.—NEST OF THE BLACK DUCK ON EAGLE ISLAND, MAY 23, 1944.

four days old, were seen in a small, temporary, fresh-water pool situated inside the sea wall along the southern shore of the island.

Mark Island. 43° 43.2' N., 69° 54' W.

Mark Island has a heavily wooded interior where a colony of 50 pairs of Great Blue Herons, a number of Black-crowned Night Herons, two pairs of Ospreys and a number of land birds nest. Around the rim of the island between the rocky shores and the trees there is a dense growth of weeds, grass and small shrubs. In the grass of this marginal area we saw two Black Ducks and a brood of young on June 14, 1943. There is no fresh water on this island.

Pumpkin Island. 43° 45.2' N., 69° 54' W.

On June 6, 1942, a female Black Duck with five downy young, a few days old, were seen among the rocks along the shores of Pumpkin Island. In addition to the many Herring Gulls, there is a large colony of Double-crested Cormorants nesting on this rocky outpost island.

The Hypocrites. 43° 48' N., 69° 35.3' W.

On June 17, 1943, a female Black Duck was seen on the Hypocrites. Her behavior was such that it was evident that she had a brood of young which we could not locate among the great masses of broken rock and huge boulders.

No Man's Land. 43° 53' N., 68° 52.2' W.

This island is a member of the Metinic group situated about 12 miles south of Vinalhaven Island in Penobscot Bay and 20 miles southeast of Rockland on the mainland.

On June 11, 1943, four adults were flushed from a dense cover of weeds and grass. In a low marsh-grass area we found a nest with nine eggs, three of which were pipped. On the same date a female and her brood of five young were seen scrambling about a small fresh-water pool among the rocks.

On June 2, 1944, we found six nests with eggs and two broods of young, a record for numbers of Black Ducks nesting within the limits of an island only a few acres in area. Of the nests containing eggs, two were found in thickets of raspberry bushes. Each of these nests contained nine eggs. One egg of one nest contained an embryo of 12-days incubation and one egg of the other had an embryo of 18-days incubation. One nest containing seven eggs was found concealed under the branches of a fallen spruce tree. One egg examined was fresh. There were two Herring Gull's nests within four feet of this Black Duck's nest. The other three nests containing five, six and seven eggs, respectively, were all found in a small area of thick, tall, marsh grass. These nests were not more than 15 to 20 feet apart. E. H. Forbush (1925) gives an account of a brood of Black Ducks he observed on No Man's Land, indicating that these birds have been breeding there for some years.

Ten Pound Island. 43° 50.8' N., 68° 53.2' W.

Ten Pound Island is also a member of the Metinic group. On June 2, 1944, we saw two adults and a brood of five young on the rocks of the eastern side of the island.

Great Spoon Island. 44° 2.5' N., 68° 33.5' W.

On June 10, 1943, we saw a female Black Duck and two ducklings scampering over the rocks at the southern end of the island. The two young, about ten days old, were caught and banded. There were probably other members of the brood which we could not find.

Schoodic Island. 44° 28' N., 68° 2' W.

A nest and seven eggs of the Black Duck were found in the marshy central section of the Island on June 12, 1941. Four other adults, which may have been nesting, were flushed from the same area. Adults were seen in 1942 and 1943 but no nests or young were discovered during these visits.

Of the 21 records of nests and young, two were obtained in 1941, one in 1942, six in 1943 and twelve in 1944. Since we visited practically the same islands each year, the increase indicated by the number of records is significant. In addition to the above records, Black Ducks were seen on or near six other islands but there was no evidence of their nesting.

There has been a marked general increase in the sea-bird population along the Maine coast in recent years, and our records seem to indicate that the Black Duck is also becoming well established as a nesting species on our coastal islands. Many of the eleven islands listed in this report presented little to attract a freshwater Duck. It is probable that many of the inner, larger islands, which provide more favorable conditions, are inhabited by more nesting Black Ducks than we have supposed.—ALFRED O. GROSS, *Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.*

Observations of Red-breasted Nuthatches.—To those who have enjoyed the antics of nuthatches at their feeding-trays, the following observation should prove interesting. While hunting in Corbin Park, near Newport, New Hampshire, on January 14, 1945, Ralph C. Morrill, of the Peabody Museum staff, saw about a dozen Red-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*) feeding on the entrails of a deer that had been dressed in the woods. Later in the day, and in another part of this extensive forest, he was attracted by shrill squeaks issuing from a small white pine tree. The disturbance proved to be an 'assault' by ten or a dozen of these nuthatches, possibly the same group, upon a little Saw-whet Owl (*Cryptoglaux acadica*). Apparently only the nuthatches were excited for, while the owl sat quietly, the former continually darted about it, over and under the limb which served as a perch, but not approaching nearer than six or eight inches from the owl. And they were doing all the squeaking.—STANLEY C. BALL, *Peabody Museum (of Natural History), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.*

Additional unrecorded Passenger Pigeons from New York State.—On December 29, 1942, when I called upon Dr. T. Van Hyning, Director of the Florida State Museum in Gainesville, I observed two freshly mounted Passenger Pigeons, *Ectopistes migratorius* (Linnaeus), on the mantle in his office. In correspondence immediately subsequent to my visit, Dr. Van Hyning stated that the two pigeons, a male and a female, had been purchased not long before from Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester, New York. The specimens were collected by the late Charles A. Bullock of Ohio, Herkimer County, New York, "about" 1890 and were taken in that vicinity.

It may be of interest to know that the purchase price of these two Passenger Pigeons was one hundred dollars which Dr. Van Hyning considered "extremely reasonable for the fine specimens."

Further general interest attends the fact that these birds, together with another individual not concerned in this note, are now displayed in a small habitat group in the Florida State Museum under Accession No. 82209 of that institution.

Both Dr. Van Hyning and I have endeavored to obtain further information on the two New York State Passenger Pigeons discussed here but without much success. Mr. Burt M. Robinson, current District Superintendent of Public Schools, Poland,