

and Game Department, and other qualified observers flushed a female Pintail from a clutch of nine eggs located in grass-forb association on the sandy flat at the southwest side of South Humboldt Bay, about 300 yards northeast from the base of the cliff known as Table Bluff. This record is the only indication that we have that Pintails nest in this area.—CHARLES F. YOCOM, *Division of Natural Resources, Humboldt State College, Arcata, California, March 29, 1957.*

**Hooded Mergansers at Afognak Island, Alaska.**—The observations reported here were made at the research station of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game located at Kitoi Bay on the east side of Afognak Island in southwestern Alaska. The area is covered by a fairly typical forest of Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*).

On November 10, 1956, I collected a female Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) in salt water at the outlet of Big Kitoi Creek. Its ovary looked immature, but it may have been one that had retrogressed. Its lower mandible was yellowish, becoming black near the horn-colored tip. The upper mandible was gray with a yellowish tinge ventrally at its base and it had a darker horn-colored tip. Its feet were gray-green to yellow-green, and its iris was brown. The skin has been presented to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

On November 13, another female Hooded Merganser was seen and on the next day she, or yet another one, was observed swimming with a male Barrow Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*). On the 17th and again on the 20th of November, when I left the station, a female was observed near the outlet of Big Kitoi Creek. It seems likely that these records pertain to a single bird residing in the area during at least the latter half of November. These observations apparently constitute an extension of the known range of the Hooded Merganser from Haines in southeastern Alaska where it is known to breed.—ARCHIE S. MOSSMAN, *Douglas, Alaska, April 18, 1957.*

**Observations on a Coot-Muskrat Relationship.**—On April 12, 1955, while engaged in a field study at Lake McMurray, Skagit County, Washington, we noted certain relationships between the American Coot (*Fulica americana*) and the muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*). The observations were made in mid-afternoon in a protected marsh area on the southern edge of the lake. The weather was marked by a strong southeast wind. The vegetation typified that of an acid bog. Red alder (*Alnus rubra*), willows (*Salix* sp.), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), and red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) formed the over-story. Creek dogwood (*Cornus occidentalis*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*), and salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) provided a secondary cover. The surface plant cover, with water depth varying from six to eighteen inches, was composed of skunk cabbage (*Lysichitum americanum*), duckweed (*Lemna minor*), and *Potentilla palustris*.

A group of five muskrats and seven to eight coots occupied the area under observation. The muskrats were feeding on the skunk cabbage roots. The spring of 1955 was phenologically late. Whether skunk cabbage was a food of preference or necessity for muskrats and coots is not known. The actions recorded here, however, indicated a possible food crisis. The skunk cabbage root has a mass of adventitious lateral roots that grow perhaps twelve inches below ground surface. The muskrats dug down along the main shaft of the root to the lateral roots, bit them off and carried them back to a favored, surface eating roost to devour them. These roots averaged an eighth to a fourth of an inch in diameter and three to five inches in length.

The coots were bathing and feeding on the pond surface. When a muskrat would leave its eating roost to secure more skunk cabbage roots, a coot would quickly clean up the root shreds left on the roost or on the adjacent water surface. Coots, apparently, could not dig or cut the skunk cabbage roots for themselves. On one occasion, a coot attempted to steal a root from a muskrat. The rat chased the coot about eight feet across the pool. No other attempts at thievery, in the presence of the rat at least, were noted. Coots were also observed to eat duckweed, sparingly.

The coots and muskrats on this area worked in close proximity, often passing within a foot of each other without noticeable antagonism. Coots appeared to be more antagonistic to each other than to muskrats. No antagonism between muskrats was noted.

When a Cooper Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) appeared, the relations that were being observed were interrupted. One coot, late in making its departure, maneuvered under a horizontal, six-inch willow