

BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

DUCK BANDING IN LIMA LAKE IN 1927

BY T. E. MUSSELMAN

Lima Lake is a tremendous swamp covering about ten or twelve thousand acres, located half-way between Quincy and Hamilton, Illinois. This site has been a paradise for hunters and fishermen since time immemorial. Numerous attempts have been made to drain the lake, which at places is now criss-crossed with drainage ditches. Although nearly a million dollars have been dropped in the mud, yet Lima Lake continues.

Due to the fact that a new project for its drainage is in the course of completion, I felt that it would be opportune for me to cease my duck banding activities at Scobey Lake, Missouri, and carry on at Lima Lake, Illinois, as I probably shall have not more than two seasons of banding here in which to find the definite migration course of the birds which are passing up and down the Mississippi River.

I was fortunate in being offered a well appointed hunting cabin at the end of one of the lateral drainage ditches. When the Illinois State Game and Fish Department heard of my proposed banding work, they were very generous in offering me the services of their local warden, together with his skiff and out-board motor. I cannot overstate the value of this contribution to my season's work, as Mr. Earl Caldwell, the warden, knows every foot of the lake and is one of the most experienced trappers and hunters that I have ever known.

The use of the boat allowed us to travel to the extremes of the lake where we could place our traps to suit ourselves. Trap No. 1 was constructed well out on a submerged mud flat and was placed in the shade of a couple of small willow trees. It was by far our most successful trap. Traps No. 2 and No. 3 were inland, one being in a small cup of water on the edge of a corn field, the other near a small woodland which was sparsely covered with water. No. 4 was in a slough and was primarily set with the purpose of capturing scaup and teal, while No. 5 was placed in the midst of a fifty-acre lily pond.

The customary covered, heart-shaped traps were built at all places. These traps were set before the ice was off the swamps. Huge flocks of Pintails and Mallards had already arrived from the Southland and were attracted to the vicinity of the traps by shelled corn which was thrown over the surface of the ice. Mr. Caldwell visited these localities from day to day, scattering corn, which resulted in the ducks learning that they could secure food in these spots. As the ice melted live decoys were placed in and about all the traps, resulting almost immediately in very satisfactory catches of the larger ducks.

A letter from Mr. Taber, of Kansas, Illinois, asked me to take the weights and make drawings of the wing expansion of the birds banded. This added much to the interest of banding as it gave me a more intimate knowledge of the various ducks. I believe that he is running an experiment on the relationship of speed in flights to wing area, and no doubt his article will appear shortly in one of the scientific magazines. Ducks which were thus captured, for weighing and drawing were not banded immediately and released, as is ordinarily done, but were put in crates and returned to the cabin.

These crates were built for the reception of the large Mallard decoy ducks, the laths being placed close enough to prevent their escape. On running the traps one successful morning, we found we had captured an entire flock of twenty-eight Green-winged Teal. They were hard to capture as they dived and swam about under the water; but gradually, one by one, they were caught and dropped into those crates built for the Mallards. We took it for granted that they were secure in these floating crates. However, they flew up and crawled through the slats in the top of the crate, about as fast as we dropped them in the doorway. Consequently very few of these interesting birds carried government bands with them when they said "good bye" to Lima Lake and headed for the Northland.



The high light of the banding season occurred on March 28, when among one of our largest catches was a drake Mallard which carried a heavy leg band, about an inch long, on its left leg. On the inside, was stamped the Bible verse, "God is love." On the outside was a lockbox number at Kingston, Ontario. This was one of Jack Miner's ducks which we had captured. A government aluminum band with number 300,527, was placed upon the right leg of the bird and, after taking the above picture of the bird, it was released again.

Fall is here with its hunting season (1927). Large numbers of returns have already come in—all from Canada, except one from St. Paul. However, from now on, I shall be receiving additional returns from the Dakotas, Iowa, Missouri, and later from Arkansas and Louisiana.

Last spring was not a good season for duck banding because of the tremendous expanses of water which covered the swamp lands. This gave the ducks too much territory over which to feed, and I am hoping that the following spring will be a dry one, so that it will force the ducks to feed in more limited areas.

Of all the banding that I have done in recent years, I enjoy the duck banding more than others, because it requires a spring vacation of ten days to do the work well. Then during the fall, the daily returns stimulate interest. At the present time I cannot give the summary of the 1927 returns but hope to do so in some future issue.

QUINCY, ILLINOIS.

DUCK BANDING NEAR THE CHEYENNE BOTTOMS, KANSAS

BY FRANK W. ROBL

In 1924, I banded 88 birds, of which 78 were water fowl. From these I have received 8 returns, or approximately 9 per cent. Among those returns were two Blue-winged Teal that were shot at Palisada in Campeche, Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico; these returns showed that the flock stayed pretty well together. Another Blue-winged Teal that had been banded here, July 16, was shot at Lake City, Minnesota, on September 16, the same year, showing that ducks hatched here may migrate northward before they start the fall migration for the south.

In 1925, I banded 356 birds, of which 347 were water fowl. The returns from these have been 31, or approximately 9 per cent. Four of these were killed in Canada. My best return in this lot was a Pintail banded February 22, 1925, taken on May 20, 1926, near Kotceba, on the Kobuc River in Alaska, about two hundred and fifty miles north of Nome. In 1926, 225 birds were banded by me, of which 208 were water fowl. Thirty-two returns were reported on those, or a fraction more than 14 per cent. So far in 1927 I have banded 220 birds, all of which are water fowl; there have been 9 returns.

Summing up, I have banded 889 birds, with 80 returns, which is an even 9 per cent. Having no information on the returns to other bird banders I do not know whether the percentage on my returns is good, or not. Most of the ducks I have banded are Pintails, followed numerically by Mallards, Blue-winged Teals, Green-winged Teals, Widgeons, and a few other species. I trap all of these ducks on a little creek about a quarter of a mile from my home, which is only four miles from the now famous Cheyenne Bottoms. The 80 duck returns were obtained in the following localities: Alaska 1, Northwest Territory 1, Saskatchewan 4, Manitoba 2, Arkansas 1, California 4, Iowa 3, Kansas 15, Louisiana 3, Minnesota 1, Mississippi 1, Montana 1, Nebraska 12, North Dakota 8, Oklahoma 5, Oregon 1, South Dakota 1, Texas 12, Wyoming 2, Campeche, Old Mexico 2, Total, 80.

The soil in the Cheyenne Bottoms is blue clay, which is so compact that it makes an almost water-tight bottom. Since there is not natural drainage, evaporation is about the only way for the water to pass off. With another

