

in a block of agricultural land some 10 miles square, and it was accomplished by one crew in 1953, two in 1954 and 1955, and three in 1956. The crews have consisted of one or two men and a dog, although one man has sometimes handled two dogs. The daily catch has ranged from two to 75 mallards per crew and has averaged 29.

To get a well-distributed sample of young mallards, just about every slough in the area has to be worked—whether or not the birds are seen in it. In many cases a mallard brood loafing on the shore will turn around and walk into the grass as soon as a vehicle stops or a banding crew appears; such a brood is seldom noted until the dog starts retrieving individuals from it. On sloughs with no emergent vegetation, mallard broods on the water will usually head for shore if they feel that they can escape unnoted. If not they may head for the deepest water, where they have to be carefully herded to shore either by wading or by canoe before the dog can work effectively.

When on land the dog works the near-shore cover on the first trip around the slough, and then the area up to 300 yards back from shore on the second coverage. As a dog approaches a duck, his tailwagging ceases up until he is at close range; then he suddenly comes to an abrupt halt, tensely waiting a few seconds for his eyes to see or his ears to hear what his nose tells him is there. He then pounces in the general area, locates the duck, works it out of cover and carries it to the nearest handler.

It might seem that when working with these "upland waterfowl" the

field men should be able to do their own duck catching, but this is not possible. One reason is that the birds usually rush into the thickest-cover bushes, grass or standing crops. Another reason is that they seldom stop near the water's edge, and within a matter of minutes may be scattered within a one-mile radius of the shore . . . And if the crew needs another excuse, they can only admit that they just don't have the nose for the job. The field books show that while each member of the two-man crew was finding one mallard, the dog had found and caught eleven. When dogs learn to attach bands and keep the records, biologists will be out of the mallard-banding business.

While dogs work best on land, they are also efficient in shallow water. After a duck has dived three or four times, the dog is usually in a position where he can put his head under water and come up with the bird. In water deep enough so that the dog has to swim, he can still scent birds in dense aquatic vegetation, but here it is usually the handler rather than the dog who does the actual catching.

Training dogs for this work differs little from that required for field trails . . . Any retriever with a good nose, basic obedience training and at least a rough idea of hand signals should develop into a good duck banding dog if he has what a dog handler calls a "soft mouth" and if he is otherwise gentle with live birds.

As this season progresses down the flyways, hunting dogs from many of the 26 states visited by Kindersley-raised mallards will be retrieving banded birds that have once before been handled by one of three other dogs—Rusty, Widgeon or Chips.

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## 1957 Summer Banding

by DR. STUART HOUSTON

My summer banding excursion resulted in a total of 1845 birds being banded, (about a thousand less than last year). These included 876 Ring-billed Gulls, 342 White Pelicans, 110 Common Terns, 75 Double-crested Cormorants, 73 California Gulls, and 10 Franklin's Gulls. The latter were banded at Beaufield Marsh, south of Perrobert on June 25th, and the

next day Frank Switzer and I took part in a drive of moulting ducks with Bernie Gollop's Canadian Wildlife Service crew aided by Tom Sterling's Ducks Unlimited air boat. A by-product of this drive was 24 adult and 34 immature Eared Grebes. Five moulting male Ring-necked Ducks were also banded.

Little Quill Lake showed a sur-

prising increase in the size of the Pelican colony. Last year 19 young Pelicans were raised there, and they were three weeks later than elsewhere, suggesting that this may have been a second attempt at nesting that year. This year over 300 Pelicans were hatched at this colony, and I banded 219 of them. It may well be that these are the same birds that once nested on Last Mountain Lake until discouraged by successive years of June flooding, and perhaps by the increasing number of fishermen's encampments at the northeast part of the lake. The Cormorant colony on Little Quill also increased in size, coincident with a sharp decrease in the numbers of this species on Last Mountain Lake.

The tiny island of nettles and rose bushes on Last Mountain which had 8 White-winged Scoter nests in 1955 (5 of the females caught and banded, see "Blue Jay", Vol. XIII, Oct. 1955, p. 28), and 5 Scoter nests in 1956 (4 females caught and banded), had 4 Scoter nests when visited this

year. Two of the three females caught proved to have been banded on the same island the previous year.

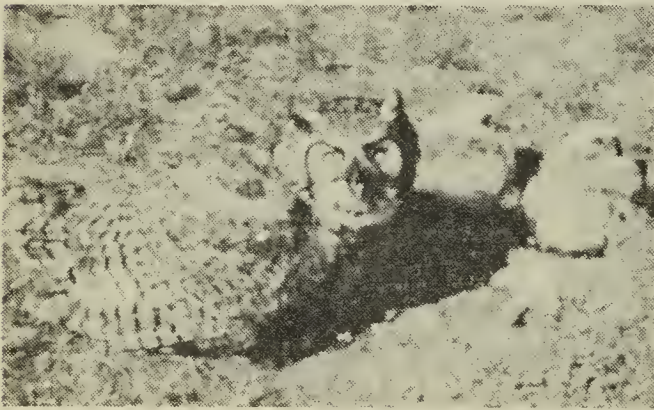
Continuous high winds marred the visit to Redberry Lake, where 123 White Pelicans were banded at the only island (of four) that could be visited.

My small sample of hawk nests, while not large enough to allow of definite conclusions, nevertheless suggested poor success and this might be linked to the low numbers of ground squirrels in recent years. A Marsh Hawk at Dilke had only three young; the youngest of three Swainson Hawks at Dilke was dead at the foot of the tree; the three Red-tailed Hawk nest located near Saltcoats by Billy Horseman raised only one young each. Similarly a Horned Owl nest at Dilke had only one young.

Two Pigeon Hawks nesting in an old Magpie nest west of Regina Beach were banded on July 7. This nest had been found by Doug Gilroy, and independently by S. R. Belcher, J. E. Belcher and Margaret Belcher.

## Crippled Owl Nesting

By RICHARD W. FYFE, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History



On May 7, 1957, I found the nest site of a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) on the ground near an abandoned salt mine south of Merid, Saskatchewan. The nest was within 30 yards of vacated mine buildings and machinery in an area of prairie entirely devoid of trees, the closest being more than a mile away. One of the parents and two young owls were found at the site which was a slight depression with no nest material (see photo). The scraped ground of the nest site measured 23 by 17 inches. The partly-eaten remains of two immature jack rabbits lay to one side of the nest; about five

feet from the nest I found a small fragment of a white egg-shell evidently from an owl egg.

As can readily be seen by the accompanying photograph the parent at the nest was very reluctant to move. Eventually it did retreat from the nest and proved to be fearless. It was caught and examination of the left wing disclosed an extensive injury to the radius and ulna which was almost completely healed. Scar tissue about one inch in length overlaid the wound and deep red coloring surrounded the scar. There appeared to be no infection. Presumably the unusual selection of the nest site was the result of one parent being crippled. However a review of the literature indicates ground nesting does occur so this may have been the normal choice of these birds.

Although only one adult was seen at the nest the other parent must have been nearby as it seems unlikely that the crippled bird could have provided food for the young. Certainly the jack rabbits must have been provided by another bird.