

Additions to the Birds of Somme

By **Ronald and Donald Hooper**, Somme, Sask.

Since the publication of the *Preliminary List of the Birds of Somme District, Saskatchewan* (Contribution No. 3, Yorkton Natural History Society) in April, 1954, four new species have been identified in the area, four additional species collected (#) and seven additional species found nesting (N). This brings the totals to 210 species identified (plus 4 hypothetical), 157 species collected, and 95 species breeding.

Nesting Records

N# EARED GREBE. About 50 nests at Neely Lake, June 18, 1955.

N# BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO. Several seen and one collected July, 1954. Nest with two young found July 16, 1954.

N LONG-EARED OWL. Nest with one egg along MacNab Creek, May 19, 1954.

N WESTERN WOOD PEEWEE. Nest found in fork of tree, June 22, 1954.

N PHILADELPHIA VIREO. Nest in top of an aspen, June 15, 1954.

N TENNESSEE WARBLER. Nest with six eggs, on ground, June 18, 1954, southeast of Somme.

N YELLOWTHROAT. Nest with three young in sapling, Aug. 3, 1954.

In addition, a second nesting record was established for the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE when a nest was found in a hole in a poplar, June, 1958.

New Species Observed

PIED-BILLED GREBE. *Podilymbus podiceps*. Four found near Dunlop Lake, July 29, 1954.

YELLOW RAIL. *Coturnicops noveboracensis*. Abundant at marsh at junction of Bowman and Shand Creeks, June 1, 8, and 10, 1954. Two collected June 10, 1954.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL. *Loxia leucoptera*. Occasionally in mixed forest, November and December, 1954.

SMITH'S LONGSPUR. *Calcarius pictus*. One seen in field in company with Lapland Longspurs, May 12, 1954.

NOTE: Copies of *The Birds of Somme* are still available for 25 cents from Stuart Houston, M.D., Box 278, Yorkton, Sask.

A Pintail Drake - Mallard Pair Association

By **Alex Dzubin**, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon, Sask.

An association of a drake Pintail (*Anas acuta*) with a pair of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) during a two-week period in May, 1958, may be worthy of note, especially as to a possible explanation for the origin of Mallard x Pintail hybrids in the wild. Such crosses are relatively rare, but have been reported by Cockrum (Wilson Bull. 64:140-159) and Sibley (Condor 59:166-191). (In Saskatchewan I trapped an adult drake hybrid at Teo Lake, Kindersley, on October 14, 1957, which clearly showed dominant Mallard coloring except for having a narrow, light-blue bill, grey-orange tarsus, elongated tail and an indistinct cinnamon-brown chest region.)

The "trio" was first seen on May 3 during a routine census of the Canadian Wildlife Service study area, 15 miles W.S.W. of Kindersley. They were flushed and flew to a nearby slough, the male Pintail keeping be-

tween the male Mallard and the hen. At 7.15 a.m. on May 9, the group was seen on a road allowance 20 feet from the water's edge. The hen appeared to be slowly moving toward nesting cover with the male Pintail three feet behind her, and the drake Mallard some four feet behind the Pintail. On four occasions within the next ten minutes, the male Pintail rushed, with head down and bill open, toward the male Mallard and chased him some six to eight feet, the male Mallard running once and flushing three times. After each rush, the Pintail returned to the vicinity of the hen, occasionally pumping his head and whistling, i.e., "burping." The hen made no aggressive movement toward the male Pintail and continued to walk into nesting cover.

Again on May 10, at 11.40 a.m., the group was observed swimming on a slough. The drake Pintail and hen Mallard were swimming close to-

gether while the male Mallard was two or three feet away. Once the male Pintail stopped swimming and turned toward the male Mallard which immediately turned and swam away. The group was flushed from the same slough on May 14 and 16, but they were not seen after this date.

A check of the nesting cover toward which the female Mallard was originally seen walking, disclosed no nest, but three Mallards' nests which had been crushed and eaten by predators were found within 100 yards of this point. One of them might have belonged to the hen in question.

During the observations it was noted that the male Pintail, through threat postures and aggressive rushes, continually kept the male Mallard away from the hen. Yet the hen showed no such threatening attitudes toward the Pintail, nor did she show any escape reactions when the Pintail swam or walked close to her. Apparently this drake, of a different species, possessed none of the signal

characteristics necessary to elicit attack or escape in the hen. One can merely speculate as to why the male Mallard did not attack the male Pintail (or if he were merely associating with a mixed pair) and why the hen attracted the male Pintail.

Sibley (*op. cit.*) has pointed out that peak times of pairing vary among species and that this functions as an isolating mechanism. Furthermore, he noted that the various intricate signal movements of males in a courting party possibly prevent species from forming mixed pairs. From the above incident it is evident that, even though mixed pairs are not commonly formed, males of some species may, at times, accompany pairs of other species. It is suggested that if the attached male is dominant over the male of the pair, he could play a part in the fertilization of any eggs which the hen lays. Even if the foreign male is not dominant, he may passively accompany the pair and play a part in fertilizing the eggs.

Green-winged Teal-Mallard Pair Association

By R. W. Nero, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

Close association of various species of birds is occasionally observed, especially in waterfowl and shorebirds which often move about in compact units. The general phenomenon of more heterogeneous species flying together momentarily when suddenly flushed has received several comments (H. Brackbill, 1952. Birds becoming "caught" in flocks of other species. *Wilson Bulletin*, 64:44). However, an observation made by Elmer Fox and myself of a close association between a hen Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and a drake Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) seems unusual and worth recording. On May 11, 1957, near some shallow sloughs south of Regina at 4.00 p.m. we saw a drake Mallard and hen and a male Green-winged Teal, fly up together and circle wildly about several times with the Teal keeping very close to the hen. They landed as a group and again the Teal stayed close beside the hen Mallard. The drake Mallard appeared to be unconcerned. We watched them for a while, then, wondering if they would repeat the pattern, flushed them from the slough. They again flew up as a group and

landed on another slough several hundred yards away. During the flight and after they landed the Teal was close beside the hen. Upon landing the drake Mallard moved away to confront another drake Mallard. A few minutes later the original trio flew back to the location where we had first seen them. When we finally drove away the three were still close together. The association between the Teal and the hen seemed based on a very close bond, suggestive of pairing. A large number of hybrid ducks, including a cross between a Mallard and a Green-winged Teal, have been reported (E. L. Cockrum, 1952. A check-list and bibliography of hybrid birds in North America north of Mexico. *Wilson Bulletin*, 64:140-159). Presumably, a relationship similar to that described here must have prevailed in many cases. The drake Mallard of the trio, evidently paired or at least attached to the hen Mallard, appeared to have developed a tolerance toward the Teal. The exact nature of this peculiar relationship remains unanswered, but other observations of a similar nature may be helpful in this respect.