

# RECORDS OF THE OLDSQUAW IN SOUTHERN MANITOBA

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On the afternoon of November 10, 1976, we observed a female Oldsquaw at Victoria Beach, Lake Winnipeg (Fig. 1). It was swimming near the shore with a female Common Goldeneye. We identified the Oldsquaw immediately as observation conditions were excellent.

The birds were observed for several minutes until the goldeneye flushed. The Oldsquaw followed and both birds flew along the shore for several hundred metres before landing. We approached the birds again and viewed them for about one more minute. Both birds flushed once again and flew out of sight toward Elk Island (1 — numbered locations in text correspond to those in Fig. 1).

W. E. Godfrey did not record the Oldsquaw in southern Manitoba (south of 54° N. latitude), but we have accumulated several records of the Oldsquaw in this region.<sup>4</sup> The earliest available record is a male shot by H. W. O. Boger at Whitehead Lake on October 19, 1899.<sup>6</sup> A. G. Lawrence, in a later summary of Oldsquaw records in southern Manitoba, reports this specimen being from Whitewater Lake (2).<sup>9</sup> Another specimen was shot on Lake Winnipegosis "prior to 1921" by J. P. Rosser (3). It was deposited in the Manitoba Agricultural College Museum.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence documented a report by C. G. Harrold of a male Oldsquaw in breeding plumage close to the shore of Lake Winnipeg near Gimli on May 2, 1921 (4).<sup>6, 9</sup> Another male Oldsquaw was observed in a flock of scaup by C. L. Borley on the Red River near St. Boniface Hospital on October 27, 1925 (5).<sup>8</sup> At Matlock, in October, 1925, a male Oldsquaw was shot by Mr. Colledge and reported by E. W. Darbey (6).<sup>9</sup> Norris-Elye of the Manitoba Museum observed a male Oldsquaw on September 18,

1926, while travelling between C. Harbor and the mouth of the F. River on Lake Winnipeg (7).<sup>10</sup> Another male was shot on October 1928, at Oak Point Lake near Libby by J. P. Phillip (8).<sup>10</sup> On November 1930, an immature male was shot by G. E. Leslie at Clandeboye Bay, Lake Manitoba (9).<sup>11</sup> Also on Lake Manitoba, a male was shot "the week of September", 1932 near L. dar (10).<sup>12</sup> P. Gramma, a fisherman on Lake Winnipeg, found a male Oldsquaw frozen on Elk Island during winter of 1934 (11).<sup>13</sup> Waller described a specimen in his collection taken by J. Reader at Reader Lake near The on September 26, 1947 (12).<sup>16</sup> An Oldsquaw was reported at Delta on May 7, 1956, in the Delta Waterfowl Research Station Spring Migration Records (13). R. W. Sutton observed an Oldsquaw in the Whiteshell Provincial Park on May 11, 1957 (14). An immature female Oldsquaw (Manitoba Museum of Man. Nature No. 2339) was shot on October 26, 1957, at Netley by A. Sagness. Another female Oldsquaw was shot at Delta by G. S. Hochbaum (pers. comm.) in the fall of 1961 (16). H. C. shot a male Oldsquaw (MMMNH 2989) on October 23, 1970, at Whiteshell Lake (17). During winter of 1971-72, a male Oldsquaw attempted to winter in open water below the dam on the Rat River near St. Malo (18). It was seen there in December, 1971, by personnel of the Manitoba Department of Renewable Resources and Transportation Services. In January, 1972, presumably this same bird was found on a near road, killed by a car. It was recovered by M. Comeau and deposited in the Manitoba Museum of Man. Nature (No. 3215). According to J. Batt, Delta Waterfowl Research Station, two juvenile male Oldsquaw



1. Locations of Oldsquaw records in southern Manitoba.

recovered in a hunter bag-  
 ck near Delta between October  
 8, 1975 (19, 20).

he Oldsquaw is a tundra nester  
 a circumpolar distribution.<sup>2 3 4</sup>

They are common nesters along Hud-  
 son Bay in northern Manitoba.<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>  
 In North America, this species winters  
 along both coasts and on the Great  
 Lakes.<sup>1 2 3 4</sup> Some birds have been

recorded wintering on the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

Portions of the Churchill population migrate through the Great Lakes, with some birds wintering on Lakes Ontario and Michigan.<sup>1,2</sup> Other individuals migrate to the Atlantic coast.<sup>2</sup> R. M. Alison suggests that most of the Oldsquaw wintering on Lake Ontario come from the Arctic via James Bay (pers. comm.). It is possible that some Oldsquaw migrate each year through southern Manitoba. That this species usually inhabits broad expanses of open water rather than marshes may account for the paucity of sightings. Further, much of the shoreline of Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Winnipegosis is inaccessible and observers seldom venture out on these lakes in search of birds. Fourteen of our records are from these large lakes. Since 17 are from fall or winter, it might appear that Oldsquaw migrate through southern Manitoba only in the fall. It is more likely that the preponderance of fall records reflects hunter reports of unusual birds shot.

One spring sighting was made offshore on Lake Winnipeg.<sup>6</sup> This indicates that Oldsquaw may be present during spring migration, but normally beyond the range of most observers. The spring record from the Whiteshell Provincial Park also occurred in an area not frequented by many bird watchers.

R. M. Alison has received spring records of Oldsquaw up to 400 miles inland from Churchill (pers. comm.). These records were mainly from rivers draining into Hudson Bay, particularly the lower Nelson River. Oldsquaw occurred in these areas prior to the spring break-up of tundra ponds along the Arctic coast. Alison suggested that spring migration of Oldsquaw occurs over a broad front, proceeding overland from the Great Lakes (pers. comm.). Palmer states that some Oldsquaw migrate northwest from Lake Superior in the spring.<sup>15</sup> Spring records from Whiteshell Provincial Park and Lake Winnipeg lend credence to this

hypothesis. Therefore, we feel that it is plausible that a small number of Oldsquaw migrate in both spring and fall each year through southern Manitoba.

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<sup>1</sup>ALISON, R. M. 1975. Breeding biology and behavior of the Oldsquaw (*Clamhyemalis* L.). Ornithological Monographs No. 18.

<sup>2</sup>BELLROSE, F. C. 1976. Ducks, geese, swans of North America. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Va. 544 pp.

<sup>3</sup>BENT, A. C. 1938. Life histories of North American wild fowl. Part 2. U.S. Mus. Bull. 130.

<sup>4</sup>GODFREY, W. E. 1966. The birds of Canada. Nat. Mus. Canada Bull.

<sup>5</sup>JEHL, J. R., and B. A. SMITH. 1970. Birds of the Churchill Region, Man. Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature Special Publication No. 1

<sup>6</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1921. Chickadee No. 6. Winnipeg Free Press. March 1921

<sup>7</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1921. Chickadee No. 7. Winnipeg Free Press. December 12, 1921.

<sup>8</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1925. Chickadee No. 240. Winnipeg Free Press. October 29, 1925.

<sup>9</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1925. Chickadee No. 245. Winnipeg Free Press. March 3, 1925.

<sup>10</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1928. Chickadee No. 403. Winnipeg Free Press. March 13, 1928.

<sup>11</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1930. Chickadee No. 505. Winnipeg Free Press. December 28, 1930.

<sup>12</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1932. Chickadee No. 604. Winnipeg Free Press. December 21, 1932.

<sup>13</sup>LAWRENCE, A. G. 1934. Chickadee No. 675. Winnipeg Free Press. March 2, 1934.

DSSOP, H. 1957. Chickadee Notes. No. 123. Winnipeg Free Press. May 24, 1957.

LMER, R. S. (ed.) 1976. Handbook of North American birds. Volume 3.

Waterfowl. Yale University Press, New Haven. 560 pp.

<sup>16</sup>WALLER, S. 1967. Some interesting bird records from The Pas, Manitoba. Blue Jay 25: 120.

# LAND RECORDS OF THE ROCK PTARMIGAN IN MANITOBA

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The Rock Ptarmigan was considered by Taverner and Sutton to be irregularly common, winter visitor at Churchill, Manitoba.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Lumsden summarized the records of its occurrence in Manitoba and Ontario and found that it moves northward occasionally in winter or within a few kilometres of Hudson Bay and James Bay coasts.<sup>4</sup> Jehl and Smith also noted that Rock Ptarmigans winter in varying numbers in the Churchill area, with major influx occurring in late fall.<sup>3</sup> They observed the remains of Rock Ptarmigans killed by predators up to 1 km inland.

Additional records presented here indicate that Rock Ptarmigans occasionally move further inland in Manitoba than Lumsden's records show. During such years, it may be abundant but inconspicuous by association with the more common familiar Willow Ptarmigan.

On December 10, 1975, one of us (J.L.) collected three Rock and two Willow ptarmigans from the same general area, about 3 km west of Gillam and about 280 km from the Hudson Bay coast. One male Rock Ptarmigan (UMZM 450) weighed 513 g. The other male (UMZM 451) was damaged. The female Rock Ptarmigan (UMZM 452) weighed 484 g. One Willow Ptarmigan (UMZM 453), a male weighing 501 g, was preserved; the crop of the damaged second individual of unknown sex, was saved.

A third Rock Ptarmigan, with a black eye stripe, was seen by Larche on the same date, about 300 m from where the birds were collected. All of the preserved ptarmigans were adults, using the criteria of outer primary pigmentation to age them.<sup>1 12</sup>

Much earlier, on December 15, 1928, J. T. Martin collected a Rock Ptarmigan at Gillam (Nat. Mus. Can. 50752).<sup>2</sup> Even further inland, Mowat and Lawrie reported the species near Brochet, Manitoba, on December 11 and 14, 1947.<sup>6</sup> In the Lake Athabasca region of northwestern Saskatchewan, Nero presented evidence for occasional winter movements of Rock Ptarmigans there.<sup>7</sup> Nero did not record them in northeastern Saskatchewan.<sup>8</sup>

Both Willow Ptarmigan crops contained willow (*Salix spp.*) buds and twigs. Two of the Rock Ptarmigan crops contained swamp birch (*Betula glandulifera*) buds and catkins. The third Rock Ptarmigan crop contained willow buds and twigs, swamp birch catkins, sedge (*Carex spp.*) and three unknown buds. Such differences in the food habits of Willow and Rock ptarmigan, taken from the same locality near Gillam, are comparable to those found in these species in winter in Alaska.<sup>5 11</sup>

Although the two ptarmigan species can usually be distinguished in the field in winter by the presence of a black eye stripe in both sexes of