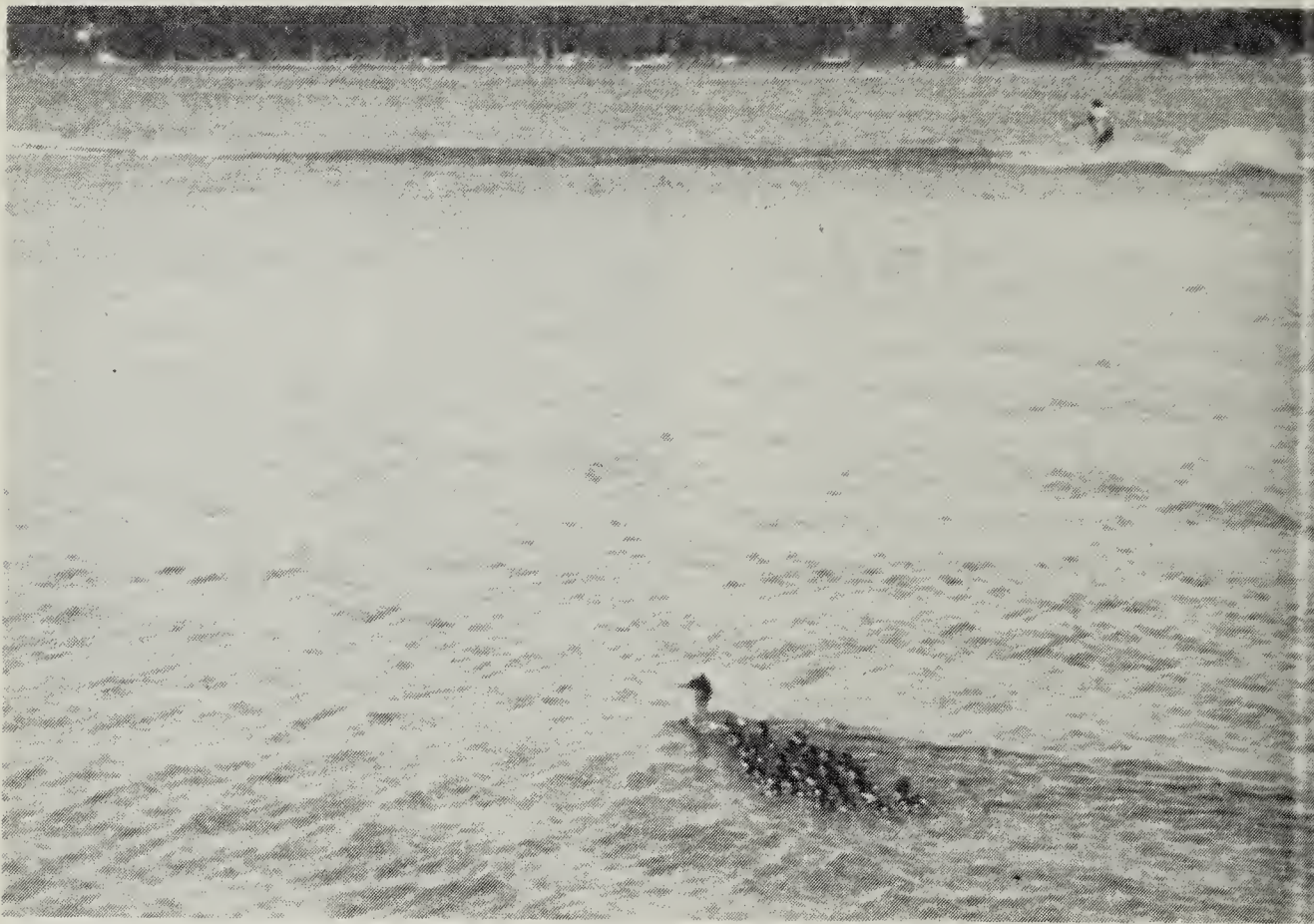


MERGANSERS AND RESORTS



Common Merganser

Marion Alleg

Taken at Emma Lake 1 July 1988, this photograph makes two statements, one about mergansers, the other about today's resort environment.

The Common Merganser may lay up to 17 eggs, although the usual clutch is 9 to 12. Examination, however, of a large color print under strong light and magnifying glass showed 20 ducklings, four larger than the others, indicating there had been two broods. Possible explanations were coalesced broods, partial brood adoption or surrogate parent, all occasional behaviours by this species. Because Emma is at the southerly limit of the breeding range, merganser broods have been uncommon on the lake, and are even rarer today. The photo-record is noteworthy.

Since the mid-1950s, resort activity at this lake has increased markedly; increased usage, reed bed clearing and shoreline cottage development now mean a decline in water-associated birds. For those that do settle in during spring when the lake is still quiet, the reproductive success is often disturbed, for starting with the first warm weekends, human activity becomes considerable. The photo tells it all.

Alvena Schnell brought this photograph to my attention; she made available references for brood formation. — Jim A. Wedgwood, 610 Leslie Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 2Z2