

DUCK BANDING IN AUGUST NEAR KINDERSLEY, SASKATCHEWAN 1983-1985

ELWOOD M. MARTIN, Wildlife Biologist, Migratory Bird Management Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland. 20708

On a project cosponsored by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Canadian Wildlife Service, for the past 3 years I have spent the month of August trapping and banding ducks near Kindersley, Saskatchewan. During the course of this work, several interesting observations have been recorded.

The banding crew consisted of myself and one assistant each year. We banded ducks on several lakes 7 to 12 mi. west

of Kindersley and on that part of Teo Lake 3 to 5 mi. southeast of Smiley. Teo Lake was our best area, and all the species of ducks we saw were recorded there at least once, with several being recorded only from that location. It was the largest and deepest of the water bodies we checked regularly. Traps baited with wheat were used, so the species we caught were primarily those attracted to this grain. However, every species of duck we observed in this area, even

Table 1. SUMMER DUCK BANDING NEAR KINDERSLEY, SASKATCHEWAN 1983-1985

<i>Species</i>	<i>1 Aug - 1 Sep</i>		<i>31 Jul - 4 Sep</i>		<i>31 Jul - 31 Aug</i>	
	<i>1983</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>Total</i>		
*Mallard	1,131	2,323	919	4,373		
*Northern Pintail	1,316	478	632	2,426		
*Blue-winged Teal	416	344	652	1,412		
*Gadwall	248	116	482	846		
*American Wigeon	78	66	163	307		
*Green-winged Teal	96	92	7	195		
*Redhead	58	92	37	187		
*Lesser Scaup	22	30	83	135		
*Canvasback	12	32	50	94		
*Ruddy Duck	1	7	32	40		
Bufflehead	2	3	1	6		
*Northern Shoveler	0	2	2	4		
Hooded Merganser	1	0	2	3		
*White-winged Scoter	0	0	3	3		
American Black Duck	1	1	0	2		
Common Goldeneye	1	0	0	1		
Barrow's Goldeneye	1	0	0	1		
Mallard x Am. Black Duck	0	1	0	1		
Mallard x Northern Pintail	0	1	0	1		
TOTALS	3,384	3,588	3,065	10,037		

* Species known to nest, based on capture of flightless young.

those not known to be interested in grain, has turned up in our traps. In fact, we were unaware of the presence of several species until they were trapped even though we were afield 7 days a week, often over 8 hours a day, and were constantly alert to all bird life around us, as evidenced by my bird list of 157 species for these periods in the Kindersley area.

We banded 10,037 ducks near Kindersley in three seasons (Table 1). Undoubtedly our most noteworthy find was in 1983. We had noticed several goldeneyes on Teo Lake when we arrived, so I was not too surprised when we caught a molting adult male Common Goldeneye on 20 August. However, imagine my amazement on 28 August when we caught a second goldeneye; I held out a wing to look at the upper surface for a preliminary determination of the bird's age and sex, and discovered I was holding a first-year male Barrow's Goldeneye. (Looking at the wings as a quick way to assess species, age and sex is a habit developed after over 15 years of identifying ducks from the wings

received in the USFWS Duck Wing Survey of U. S. waterfowl hunters. Also, the goldeneyes have been of special interest to me, and I worked closely with S. M. Carney while he perfected the technique for identification of goldeneyes using wing characters.¹) It took me a moment to recover from the shock of this discovery. Then I banded the bird and before releasing it, took half a dozen pictures.

I realised that the Barrow's Goldeneye must be very rare or accidental in this area and reported it to the regional editor of *American Birds* who then included it in his report.³ Since then I have learned just how rare this species is in Saskatchewan. This appears to be the first record documented by photographs, preceding the photographs obtained by Escott on 10 October 1983 by 43 days.² This experience has also made me more cautious in my sight identifications of goldeneyes. When I saw a distant goldeneye on Teo Lake this past August (1985) which appeared to have a high forehead and smallish bill in profile, I



Barrow's Goldeneye, 28 August 1983

Elwood Martin



Barrow's Goldeneye Elwood Martin

recorded it as goldeneye species rather than simply wondering briefly about its odd appearance and automatically checking off Common Goldeneye as I would have done before. I agree with Escott that the Barrow's Goldeneye may not be as rare as the records indicate.² With any species, most encounters away from their normal range are with immature birds or, if in summer, with adults which may travel some distance to molt. The identification of such birds can be difficult even under the best of conditions.

We caught several other ducks not expected in the Kindersley area very often, if at all. They include a second year male Hooded Merganser at Teo Lake on 5 August 1983, a first year male Hooded Merganser on a lake about 10 mi. west of Kindersley on 31 July 1985, a second year female Hooded Merganser on the same lake on 13 August 1985, and adult

male Black Ducks on Teo Lake on 1 September 1983 and 17 August 1984. On 14 August 1985 we caught three large but still mostly downy White-winged Scoters at Teo Lake, our first indication that this species was present. We caught one or more of them several more times during the month and saw their mother a few times but never saw more than four birds at once, apparently the only family on the lake. Stuart Houston tells me that this is the first report of nesting for this area of which he is aware though the species has been reported from Teo Lake at least once before according to his files. We have confirmed, based on the capture of birds too young to fly, that at least 12 of the 17 species we have observed on Teo Lake have nested there at least once during the past 3 summers (Table 1). More work will undoubtedly increase this August list. A prime candidate for addition to both species and breeding bird lists is the Cinnamon Teal.⁴ It is apparently recorded here with some regularity earlier in the year but by August the problem of distinguishing it from the much more common Blue-winged Teal, even in the hand, is one we have some doubts about and are still struggling with. I hope to return next August to continue the struggle and see what surprises the new season holds for me. I thank Stuart Houston for his advice and assistance in the preparation of this report.

¹ CARNEY, S.M. 1983. Species, age and sex identification of nearctic goldeneyes from wings. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 47(3):754-761.

² ESCOTT, C.J. 1984. Barrow's Goldeneye in Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 42(2):89-90.

³ HARRIS, W.C. 1984. Prairie Provinces region. *Amer. Birds* 38(2):214-216.

⁴ HOUSTON, C.S. 1984. Kindersley. Pages 94-95 *IN* Finlay, ed. A bird-finding guide to Canada. Hurtig, Edmonton. 387 pp.