

SASKATCHEWAN WATERFOWL BANDERS TO 1954*

C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J8
E-mail: houstons@duke.usask.ca

This article completes the series on early Saskatchewan bird banders, from 1923 until 1954. Localities are within Saskatchewan unless stated otherwise.

Ducks Unlimited banders

Between 1939 and 1954, people in Saskatchewan who banded ducks under permit #00077 of Ducks Unlimited (DU) were **W.G. Leitch** (1287 ducks, mainly at Caron Potholes, Old Wives Lake, and Last Mountain Lake); **Sam White** (100 at Tenaille Lake); **T.E. Randall** (293 at Kazan Lake); **Dave Larson**, **Lyle Ehman** and **Lloyd Sutton** (153 at Caron Potholes); **A.J. Matheson** (3136 at Neilburg and 963 at Waterhen Marsh); **R.D.C. Anderson** (1571 at Scentgrass Lake); and **J.H. Wilson** (4414 at Leech Lake south of Yorkton and 1762 at Last Mountain Lake). In addition, as detailed in previous accounts, Fred Bard, Hartley Fredeen, Tom Harper and I did most or all of our waterfowl banding under the auspices of DU. Wilson was the only waterfowl bander of this period to have obtained a recovery of a non-game bird, a Marbled Godwit, banded at Leech Lake south of Yorkton on 3 August 1944 and picked up dead at Oxnard, California, four months later.

B.W. Cartwright published two editions of a booklet listing all waterfowl banding by Ducks Unlimited through 1950, and then updated to 1954.^{1,2} It included a map in which green dots depicted recoveries of ducks

originating in Saskatchewan; black dots, Alberta; and red dots, Manitoba. A photo of Mrs. I. M. Priestly, my mentor and the founder of *Blue Jay*, was on the cover of the 1952 version. The 1952 version had maps for the Mallard, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal and Lesser Scaup, but the 1956 version omitted the last two species.

Visitors to Saskatchewan

Roland Williams (permit #03281) came briefly from Wisconsin to canoe the Churchill River in 1926, where he banded one Mallard at Dipper Rapids and another at Knee Lake; the latter bird was shot near Ile-à-la-Crosse. Another visitor was **Burt Gresham** (permit #00036) of Winnipeg, who banded an unknown number of American White Pelicans at Quill Lakes in 1939. One pelican was found dead locally, one was shot in Illinois and one was injured in Oklahoma. **Harrison F. Lewis** (permit #00039), chief of the Dominion Wildlife Service, Ottawa, banded 12 Mallards at Prince Albert in 1948. One Mallard was shot locally and one in Minnesota. **W. Earl Godfrey** (permit #00085) of the National Museum in Ottawa, banded 14 Ring-billed Gulls and 3 Common Terns at Maple Creek in 1956. **D.G. Colls** (permit #00579), a federal wildlife bird officer from Winnipeg, banded seven Canada Geese at Duck Mountain Park in 1951, five of which were shot at Oak Lake, Manitoba on 2 and 3 November that year.

United States government banders

In the 1930s, four Americans were sent by government agencies to Saskatchewan to study the massive drop in duck populations. Two of them, **Webb H. Ransom** (permit #04241) and **George B. Saunders** (permit #03305), were given the new position of “flyway biologist” in 1936. Each banded a few ducks incidentally to his survey duties. Ransom banded 18 individuals of five duck species, 1934-1936, and two of his Mallards were shot locally. Saunders banded 31 individuals of four species in 1938. His recoveries were two Northern Pintails shot locally, and one Mallard shot in Utah. **Edward T. Carter** (permit #00342) came from Illinois in 1937 as the first of a group later known as United States Game Management Agents (USGMAs). He banded 16 pintails in five localities in 1937; four were shot in Saskatchewan and one in Montana. **Robert C. McClanahan** (permit #00500) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C., visited Saskatchewan at least four times. In 1940, he banded three Ferruginous Hawk nestlings near Beverly and three Double-crested Cormorants at Last Mountain Lake. In 1941, he banded 132 Ring-billed Gulls at Imperial Beach, Last Mountain Lake, and had one recovery of a gull that died of a “miscellaneous cause” at 11 years of age, then an apparent longevity record. Another Ring-billed Gull was found dead at Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Mexico. In 1947 and 1948, McClanahan banded 5,449 waterfowl of 14 species in Saskatchewan, from which he had 569 recoveries.

After the Second World War, a number of United States Game Management Agents came into Saskatchewan to carry out extensive studies on waterfowl populations,

breeding conditions, food habits and nesting success. One component of their assignment was to band ducks. The first of these, **Floyd Thompson** (permit #06503), from Utah, pioneered “drive-banding” of moulting ducks, whereby a group of men waded slowly through the marsh, driving flightless ducks into a funnel and thence into an enclosure, while a propeller-driven ‘air boat’ went back and forth behind the men to keep the ducks from breaking backwards into more open water.⁸

Each agent came with one or two state biologists or technicians, and often worked with Canadian Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited personnel in conducting duck drives. One such drive, on White Heron Lake immediately southeast of Kerrobert in 1952, netted an incredible number of moulting flightless adult males: 2,025 pintails, 1,393 Green-winged Teal, 447 Blue-winged Teal and 112 Mallards. Between 1950 and 1954, Thompson banded 24,623 waterfowl of 15 species (including 9,557 Northern Pintails), with 956 recoveries. The 1950 banding crew, consisting of USGMAs Floyd Thompson, R. Lawhorn and C. Mueller, assisted by E. Paynter and W. Brownlee from Saskatchewan Game Branch, concentrated on Old Wives and Eyebrow Lakes. William Elder of the University of Missouri used his fluoroscopic equipment to determine the incidence of lead in waterfowl tissues.³ Banding was somewhat less successful in 1951, in part because “swimmer’s itch had a serious effect on the personnel and their work.”⁴

John J. Lynch (permit #06706), from Louisiana, visited Eyebrow Lake near Tugaske in 1949. He banded 3,733 waterfowl of 10 species, from which there were 428 recoveries. About three-quarters of the ducks were banded at

Eye-brow Lake; one drive yielded 1,630 ducks.¹⁰ **Jerome J. Stoudt** (permit #06709), from South Dakota, began his long-term Saskatchewan banding studies of waterfowl near Redvers in 1952.⁹ By 1954, he had banded 498 ducks of eight species, with 116 recoveries.

A whole string of waterfowl banders followed in quick succession, beginning with **R.J. Buller** (permit #07294) from New Mexico and **R.C. Tice** (permit #07653) from Ohio in 1954, **Don W. Kriebel** (permit #07714) from Texas in 1954-55, and **Charles R. Hayes** (permit #06806) from Colorado in 1954-56. Between them they banded 5,068 ducks, from which there were 510 recoveries. In 1954, **Seth H. Low** (permit #04071), chief of the banding office in Patuxent, Maryland, visited the new USGMAs in the prairie provinces and one private bander. He brought me two mist nets that he had obtained from Japan and demonstrated their use by catching a Gray Catbird and a Yellow Warbler near Yorkton. This was the first time mist nets had been used in our province. During his tour, Low caught a brood of seven Northern Pintails at Big Muddy, and from these had an impressive five recoveries, one each in South Dakota, Nebraska, Louisiana, Texas, and Colombia.

Prince Albert National Park

Banding of Mallards was done at Hanging Heart Lakes, Prince Albert National Park, under two superintendents, **B.I.M. Strong** (permit #00583) (1951, 25 banded) and **J.D.B. MacFarlane** (permit #00733) (1954, 27 banded with 8 recoveries). Banding at Hanging Heart Lakes continued until 1958 under **A.M. Pearson** (permit #00852).

Canadian Wildlife Service

Bernie Gollop (permit #00592) was the first major Saskatchewan waterfowl bander with the Canadian Wildlife Service. In 1952, Gollop caught 379 young in fish-landing nets.⁵ In 1953, he banded 941 flightless young Mallards and Northern Pintails; until mid-July he caught them in the water or drove them onto land but thereafter a soft-mouth Golden Labrador Retriever owned by M.W. Morgan of Kindersley caught about 800 ducks in 20 days.⁶ Altogether, between 1952 and 1954, Gollop banded 4,284 waterfowl of 11 species, with 529 recoveries. One of Bernie's first student assistants was **Richard W. Fyfe** (under Gollop's permit number), who had one local recovery each from a single Marbled Godwit and from one set of nestlings of Black-billed Magpies banded in 1954.

Gollop published the results of retriever use to catch ducks, mainly Mallards, reaching a total of 1,818 in his first three years. An average two-man dog crew working parts of 18 days made 72 trips into sloughs and caught 349 Mallards. Gollop concluded that use of retrievers offered "the most practical technique ... to catch an adequate, well-distributed sample of mallards (and pintails)."⁷ This was pioneering work.

Acknowledgments: I thank Alex Dzubin for helpful comments and Henry Milt Reeves for information on waterfowl banders from the United States.

*Number 24 in a series of articles on Saskatchewan bird banders.

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Wire trap used by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to corral ducks for banding, Alberta 1961.

(J. B. Gollop collection)