

NEWS FROM THE DUCK WORLD.

Immediately south of Yorkton, west of No. 9 highway, is a wide "draw" which is favoured every year as a nesting ground by a certain number of mallards, in spite of the fact that the nearest water (Bull's Creek) is well over a mile away. This raised the question as to how far baby ducks could walk to get to open water. We referred the problem to B.W. Cartwright, Chief Naturalist of Ducks Unlimited and here is his reply - "Answering your query as to how far baby ducks can walk in search of water, this depends very largely on the type of country they have to traverse. A. Hochbaum, Delta, has found that they can make four miles without difficulty but this was under ideal conditions where they were able to get out onto a sandy road and walk without obstructions. We have no very definite knowledge as to how far they can walk over the prairie but we do know that it is at least two miles. They stop and rest frequently and feed on insects en route. The female broods them whenever they get tired, or danger from hawks threatens. It is not unlikely that a brood may take two days to get to permanent water as the journeys appear to be made in a very leisurely manner."

F. Rouse, Scott Experimental Station, had an interesting experience with a duck this summer. "On the evening of July 19," he writes, "I was riding in a light delivery truck on a side road when I saw a duck with a brood of young ones a few feet in front of the car. They were well to the side however and out of danger. All the same, the mother duck evidently thought the truck was too close and rose to attack it, but then decided to lead it away by flying in front! This she did, flying about six or eight feet ahead, just above bumper height. Without any apparent effort she kept this position for a mile, with the truck travelling at 30 miles per hour. As she flew she watched the truck by slowly weaving her neck from side to side.

At the end of the mile a remarkable thing happened. We were travelling north towards a highway alongside which were telephone wires. Apparently our duck had always been used to flying over wires, so on getting close to these along the highway, she flew up and over, and came down on the other side still flying north. At this point we turned east. Had I been driving the truck myself I would have stopped to see if she flew back to her young ones right away, but the last I saw of her she appeared to be landing in the crop just north of the highway - no doubt well satisfied with a job well done.

DUCK BANDING.

Our Yorkton bird banders have been busy. Stuart Houston has banded 1267 ducks at Rousay's Lake in less than two months and J.H. Wilson, who has been watching the wildlife at Leech Lake since spring for Ducks Unlimited has banded over 2000 to date.

Stuart has had six birds which he banded last year, return to his traps this summer. All of these were females and included two Blue-winged Teal, two Mallards, and two Redheads. This adds proof to the theory that it is the female duck which decides on the nesting locality. It is believed that as a general rule birds return to the area where they were hatched, mating taking place after arrival, but since ducks mostly pair while on their way north, Mrs. Duck may take her husband far from his original home. This is just one of the many problems of bird life which may be solved through banding.

Ducks Unlimited aim to have 10,000 ducks banded each season in the prairie provinces, to give vital data on production and migration. Last year D.U. banded 9667 ducks, of which 5261 were banded in Saskatchewan - 1762 at Last Mountain Lake by J.H. Wilson; 1663 at Regina by F.G. Bard; 1280 at Neilburg by A.J. Matheson, and 556 at Yorkton by Stuart Houston.

We are hoping to get in touch with all the birdbanders in Saskatchewan and thus be able to devote one page of the Blue Jay to banding news.