

SASKATCHEWAN BIRD BANDERS.

by C. Stuart Houston

7. J. H. Wilson, INDIAN HEAD In the past three years, as part of Ducks Unlimited's waterfowl research program, J.H. (Jack) Wilson has banded a total of 6927 birds of 23 different species.

In 1943 Mr. Wilson banded 156 birds at Raspberry Lakes south of Indian Head, and 1606 at Last Mountain Lake. In 1944 and 1945 he worked at Leech Lake south of Yorkton (the Illinois Project of Ducks Unlimited) and banded 2479 and 2686 water fowl respectively. For all three seasons, Blue-winged Teal top his list with 2051 individual birds banded, followed by Mallard (1708); Pintail (1253); Green-winged Teal (608); Redhead (426); American Coot (393); Baldpate (209). Less common species banded include Black-crowned Night Heron (3); Ring-billed Gull (1); and Cinnamon Teal (1).

Of the 4241 birds banded by Mr. Wilson in 1943 and 1944, 237 were subsequently reported from five different countries. A Pintail was shot in Mexico; Blue-winged Teal travelled to Cuba and Honduras. Others were reported from 25 states of the U.S.A. and three provinces of Canada. Perhaps the most interesting recovery was that of the male Cinnamon Teal (a duck of the Pacific coast area and rarely seen on the prairies) which was trapped and banded at Leech Lake, June 16, 1944, and shot at Huntington Beach, California, December 9 of the same year. A Marbled Godwit banded at Leech Lake, August, 1944, was picked up dead at Oxnard, north of Los Angeles, in December, 1944.

Other returns indicate the rate at which ducks travel south in the fall. An immature female green-winged Teal banded Oct. 11, 1943, was shot eight days later at Grand Island, Nebraska, 780 miles distant. And an adult female of the same species, banded Oct. 22 was recovered on Nov. 2 at Farmersville, Texas, having travelled 1340 miles in 11 days. It is believed that the daily average distance covered by ducks in migration is about 100 miles, but occasionally record flights occur. Such a flight was made by a female Blue-winged Teal banded at Leech Lake on September 19, 1945, and shot the following day, September 20, near Princeton, Minn.- an airline distance of 565 miles.

Extensive banding in Western Canada by Ducks Unlimited has shown that a number of ducks, particularly Pintails from Alberta, cross the western Mountain ranges to winter in California. This route is also taken by ducks from further east on the prairies. Three Pintails and two Green-winged Teal banded by Mr. Wilson in 1943 and 1944 were shot in California the winter following their banding.

Banding has also shed light on the problem of whether ducks return to the same area in which they are hatched. Forty-four ducks - 15 Mallards, 5 Pintails, 22 Blue-Winged Teal, 1 Redhead, and 1 Green-winged Teal - which were banded by Mr. Wilson at Leech Lake in 1944 were retrapped there in 1945. Of these 44 birds, 23 were adult females and 14 immature females, and 5 were adult males and 2 immature males at time of banding. This high percentage of females bears out the theory that it is the female ducks which return to the same locality year after year, while the drakes that mate on the way north follow where their mate takes them.

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Note: All banded birds which are found should be reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. Some bands may bear the inscription "Notify Biological Survey"; this bureau was made part of the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1940.