

A NEW BIRD FOR OKLAHOMA: MOTTLED DUCK

BY GEORGE M. SUTTON

AT ABOUT 14:00 on 16 December 1970 (weather foggy to rainy; air temperature about 50° F. at noon; little wind) Malcolm M. Exendine, Biologist of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, collected an adult drake Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*) at a small playa pond 2½ miles southwest of Burns Flat, Washita County, west-central Oklahoma. The bird was with a flock of Mallards (*A. platyrhynchos*). It was unbanded.

On preparing the specimen as a scientific skin, I found it to be exceedingly fat (weight 1057.9 grams). The bill was fairly bright yellow except for the blackish nail and a narrow border of black at the very base. The legs and feet, including the webs, were reddish orange, the eyes dark brown. The tail feathers were without the frayed edging and tipping that is characteristic of ducks in



MOTTLED DUCK IN FLIGHTLESS STAGE OF LATE SUMMER MOLT

Adult male captured, banded, and released at the Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Refuge in Barton County, central Kansas, on 29 July 1964 by Marvin W. Schilling et al. The almost unmarked cheek and the narrow black line at the base of the bill are distinctive. Photographed by Merril G. McHenry.

their first winter plumage. The skin was tender. The gizzard and gullet were packed with milo maize or some such grain.

The specimen (UOMZ 6905) is the first of the Mottled Duck for Oklahoma. It represents the western race, *A. f. maculosa*, a form described as a full species, "*Anas maculosa*," eighty-some years ago (Sennett, 1889, Auk, 6: 263-65). *Maculosa* differs from the other currently recognized race, *A. f. fulvigula* of Florida, chiefly in being more heavily speckled with dusky on the cheeks.

The Mottled Duck has long been known to inhabit two discrete areas—the "coastal region" of Texas and Louisiana, and "peninsular Florida from Alachua County southward" (1957, AOU Check-list, p. 72). The western population (i.e., the race *maculosa*) has wandered "inland for considerable distances" in winter (*op. cit.*, p. 73). Obviously it has wandered as far as Kansas, for it has been seen there repeatedly, notably at the Cheyenne Bottoms, in the central part of the state, where it has nested (McHenry, 1968, Wilson Bull., 80: 229-30). Mottled Ducks that inhabit Florida and the "coastal region" of Louisiana and Texas are believed to be non-migratory (Kortright, 1942, The ducks, geese and swans of North America, pp. 172-174); but I am informed by Marvin D. Schwilling, Waterfowl Project Leader of the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission of Kansas (letter of 26 April 1971), that an adult Mottled Duck banded at the Cheyenne Bottoms on 5 March 1968 was shot near Jennings, southwestern Louisiana, on 17 December 1969, and furthermore that Mottled Ducks have been banded at the Cheyenne Bottoms during every month of the year except December and January, so the Kansas population of *maculosa* is—at least to some extent—migratory.

Since *Anas fulvigula maculosa* has wandered into central Kansas, it probably has wandered into Oklahoma too, especially into such inviting areas of marshland as those of the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in the north-central part of the state. Yet it has not heretofore been reported from any part of Oklahoma—this despite my suggestion that "dark-looking ducks seen in summer and late spring should be identified with care" (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 49). A dark duck seen by W. Marvin Davis at a fishery pond near Armstrong, Bryan County, southeastern Oklahoma, on 22 July 1964—and provisionally identified by him as a Black Duck (*A. rubripes*)—might possibly, in my opinion, have been a Mottled Duck.

The homing instinct in many waterfowl is powerful. The Mottled Duck has long been thought to be sedentary—i.e., strictly non-migratory—yet it now appears to be developing a migratory habit in part of its range. What led those first adventurers to fly from the Gulf Coast to the Cheyenne Bottoms? Was the Gulf Coast overcrowded with Mottled Ducks? How long ago did the species make the move? What route did it follow in reaching Kansas? Did it do its wandering in spring, or in late summer, after the breeding season? Will the

Cheyenne Bottoms population eventually become sedentary, or will *Anas fulvigula* of the Southern Great Plains be regularly, and perhaps strongly, migratory?

*Anas fulvigula* is worthy of careful watching at this moment in time. Oklahoma bird students must do their share of the watching. Every "Black Duck" seen from now on must be identified with great care.

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## THE GLAUCOUS GULL IN OKLAHOMA

BY BERTIN W. ANDERSON

ON 5 FEBRUARY 1971, along the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River just below the Salt Plains Reservoir dam, in Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma, I observed two Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*). Each was obviously larger and "whiter" than any of the numerous Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*) with which they were feeding and loafing at the water's edge. I collected one of the two, finding the specimen to be in second winter plumage. Its bill was flesh-colored with dusky tip, its legs and feet grayish flesh-color. Its primaries were wholly white, in this respect being very different from those of a specimen in first winter feather taken by George M. Sutton at Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island, in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, on 6 September 1962. In the Victoria Island specimen each primary is pale grayish buff (almost white), marked with a subterminal gray spot and vague gray marbling.

The Oklahoma specimen, a male, now No. 7175 in the University of Oklahoma bird collection, is the second specimen of *L. hyperboreus* for the state. The first was taken on 17 December 1880 (Ragsdale, 1881, Bull. Nuttall Orn. Club, 6: 187) along the Red River just north of Clay County, Texas (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 216).

According to data filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, the Glaucous Gull visits Oklahoma only in mid-winter. The earliest fall date for the species, 17 December 1880, happens to be that on which the first Oklahoma specimen was taken (see above). On the latest "spring" date, 12 March 1960, a "nearly white" individual was seen at Lake Overholser, in central Oklahoma, by John G. Newell. Between 25 December and 15 February the species has been seen several times, chiefly by Newell at Lakes Hefner and Overholser. Occurrence in Oklahoma has not been patently cyclic. First recorded in 1880, next in 1942 (two birds at Grand Lake), it has been seen each winter from 1959 through 1963, from 1966 through 1968, in 1970, and in 1971. It has never been common. The state's several large impoundments, all of them created within the past seventy-five years, probably have been largely responsible for the species' presence here.

*Larus hyperboreus* has been reported from the following Oklahoma localities: Red River in Jefferson County or Cotton County, one record (1880); Grand Lake,