



"The Chat"
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GENERAL FIELD NOTES

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This department will carry noteworthy data to the extent of the allotted space. Bare lists of occurrences, unless of special interest, will be held for publication in regional groupings. All material should be sent to the Department Editor. It may be presented in final form or subject to re-write. The normal dead-line for any issue is six weeks prior to the issue date. Data must be complete enough to enable the Council to render decisions.

Wilson's Petrel at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.—On 10 September 1964, during the passage of hurricane Dora, I saw a Wilson's Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) from our beach on Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina. I am familiar with the bird from trips to Jamaica. Watching with glasses, I saw the small size, peculiar flight, white rump-patch, and square tail—with the feet sticking out beyond it.

Our house is directly on the beach, and we stayed in it throughout the hurricane. Luckily, there was no real damage except to our sea wall.—CAROLINE NEWHALL, *North Forest Beach, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, 11 September 1964.* (U. S. Weather Bureau records for Charleston for September 1964 contain the following statement relative to the approach of hurricane Dora, 9 and 10 September: "sustained high onshore winds, heavy surf; winds continuously exceeded 20 MPH for 49 hrs. & 30 MPH for 12 hrs."—*Dept. Ed.*)

Nesting Record for the Canada Goose in Wake County, North Carolina.—There are at least four documented records of the Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) nesting in the Carolinas. These are: two at Spartanburg, South Carolina (Cannon, 1950 and 1952); one "near Long Creek Lodge" in Surry County, North Carolina (N. C. Dept. of C. & D., 1944); and one at Gaddy's Goose Refuge in Anson County, North Carolina (Gaddy, 1943). It should be noted that in the Anson County record it is probable that one parent, if not both, was captive. A fifth record was added on 30 April 1964, when James F. Parnell and I found a single nesting female at Lake Raleigh in Wake County, North Carolina.

The nest was located on a narrow finger of land about 75 yards long, which projected into the lake from the northeast shore. The finger was



Female Canada Goose incubates four eggs in a nest located at Lake Raleigh, Wake County, N. C. (Photo by Fred L. Johns)

bisected lengthwise by a small creek, with the nest on the northernmost side some 20 yards from the point. Willow (*Salix nigra*) and Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) formed a dome-shaped canopy extending across the peninsula and ranging up to 15 feet in height. Vegetation inside the canopy was sparse and the nest was exposed to full view, although it could not be seen at all from outside the canopy. The nest was on the ground in a sparse stand of poison oak (*Rhus*, sp.), less than 1 foot above the high-water level. It was some 10 feet from the lake shore on one side and 4 feet from the creek on the other. The nest was composed of small, dead twigs. It was approximately 14 to 16 inches in outside diameter, 12 inches inside diameter, and 3 inches from ground level to the upper edge. A light coat of gray down lined the nest and was used to cover the eggs when the female was away.

Incubation was already in progress on the morning that the nest was discovered. The bird was provoked into rising off the nest only enough to satisfy the observers that eggs were definitely present. The broken, empty shell of one egg, apparently destroyed by a predator, was found about 15 feet from the nest. The nest was visited on 21 different days during the succeeding 33-day period, usually by myself but sometimes by Dr. Parnell or Fred L. Johns. On most visits the goose was on the nest. On 11 and 14 May, however, the goose was away when I approached. It was then determined that there were four eggs in the nest. The eggs had been carefully covered with down and were warm. On both of these visits the goose returned, flying, within moments of my arrival. Honking strongly, she unhesitatingly rushed into an aggressive threat display

with wings spread, head extended, and bill open. As soon as I retreated some 15 to 20 feet from the nest, the threat display stopped and the goose resumed incubation. On 26 May the goose was again away when I visited the nest; the eggs were noticeably colder than before. The nest was examined and photographed for more than 20 minutes before the goose arrived. She performed the threat display, although it was not nearly so dramatic as on the previous visits, and then settled on the eggs. On 27 May this performance was repeated. On 28 May the goose came near the observer, hissing and honking, but she did not go near the nest. One very putrid egg, later proved to be infertile, was collected. The nest was last visited on 2 June. The goose was heard about 50 to 60 yards away, but she did not approach the nest. Two eggs—one putrid and one fresh, both of which were infertile—had been destroyed by predators. The third and last egg was collected, and it too was later proved to be infertile. Incubation had apparently ended on 26 May, the twenty-eighth day of observation.

The actions of this goose at Lake Raleigh represent a nesting attempt some 500 miles to the south of the normal breeding range for the species. No gander was seen or heard during the entire period. There are no known reports of domesticated geese in the Lake Raleigh area. The bird was apparently uninjured, for she was seen in flight on 11 and 14 May. She incubated at least up to and probably beyond the required period of 28 to 30 days, but all four incubated eggs were determined to be infertile. The nesting record reported here is indeed unusual, first because of its presence, and second because of the fact that a clutch of infertile eggs was laid and incubated for the full incubation period. The circumstances leading up to this unusual record, especially the possibilities of a deceased mate or unsuccessful mating attempt, are open to speculation and can not be determined.

LITERATURE CITED

Cannon, Gabriel.

1950. Canada Geese nest at Spartanburg, S. C. *The Chat* 14:15.

1952. Notes from Spartanburg, S. C. *The Chat* 16:98.

Gaddy, H. R.

1943. People and geese are welcome at Lockhart Gaddy's Wildlife Refuge. *The Chat* 7:8.

N. C. Department of Conservation and Development.

1944. Cover caption. *North Carolina Wildlife Conservation*. VIII, No. 6.

JAMES H. HUNT, *Department of Zoology, North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina at Raleigh, 9 July 1964.*

An August Sighting of the Common Scoter at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.—On 11 August 1964, Frank Wilson, Mildred Lawrence, and I saw three male Common Scoters (*Oidemia nigra*) at Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina. There was a moderate surf and the birds were swimming just beyond the breakers at distances varying between 200 and 500 feet from us. We watched them with glasses over a period of about two hours, but we did not see them fly. They appeared to be fully adult males with the orange "swelling" at the base of the bill very conspicuous.

The wind was from the northeast and gusty, but there had been no really hard blow. We first sighted the Scoters at about 4:00 PM. Earlier there had been some rain, but by that time it was clear. I believe there is no previous record of the occurrence of the Common Scoter on the South Carolina coast so early in the fall.—MRS. CAROLINE NEWHALL, *North Forest Beach, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, 1 September 1964.*

Long-billed Curlew at Oregon Inlet, North Carolina.—At 9:00 AM on 4 September 1964, I parked near the Oregon Inlet Marina on the Outer Banks of Dare County, North Carolina, and walked north on the highway