

*British Columbia.*—Comox (Nov. 9 and 15, 1903).

*Mackenzie.*—Langton Bay, arm of Franklin Bay (Sept. 12, 1910); Franklin Bay (June, 1905); Mackenzie River Delta (July 28, 1908; Sept. 8, 1909); mouth of Horton River, Franklin Bay (spring or summer, 1908).

*Yukon.*—Mouth of Firth River (Aug. 1, 1914 [nestling]).

*California.*—Monterey (Jan. 26, 1897; March 15, 1897); California (no further data given).

*Texas.*—Red River in Clay County (Dec. 17, 1880).

*Washington.*—Tacoma (May 2, 1914); Seattle Harbor (May 12, 1896).

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### GENERAL NOTES.

**Cause of the "Fishy" Flavor of the Flesh of Wild Ducks.**—Occasional specimens of wild ducks, apparently of any of the species, prove upon trial to have an unpleasant taste, which usually is called "fishy." The general conclusion in such cases is that the particular bird involved acquired its unusual flavor by feeding upon fishes. In other words fishiness is caused by eating fishes and everything that lives upon fishes is fishy.

To the writer it has long seemed that this theory, statement and conclusion are open to challenge. In the first place the majority of the species of wild ducks ordinarily eat very few fishes and secondly it is entirely improbable that an individual wild duck would depart so widely from the habitual feeding habits of its kind, and for so long a time, that as a result its flesh would be tainted.

Let us inquire into the matter of fish-eating causing fishiness. The importance of plentiful and cheap sources of protein has led to investigations of the value of fish as food for various animals, and among other points, that of the influence of this food upon the meat and other products has received attention. Investigations of the United States Department of Agriculture are summarized<sup>1</sup> as follows: "From the feeding experiments it appears that there has not been just cause for the assumption that the feeding of fish meal of good quality imparts a fishy taint to such products as milk, butter, eggs and meat. . . .if fed in reasonable amounts in conjunction with other foods."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Weber, F. C. Bull. 378, p. 20, 21, Aug. 22, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> This conclusion is corroborated in the following publications also. Live Stock Journ. (London), 77, 1913, No. 2039, pp. 463-4; Rev. Centro, Estud. Agron. y Vet., 7, 1914, No. 72, pp. 258-270; Bull. 610, U. S. Dept. Agr. Dec. 7, 1917, pp. 9.

What is the case with wild birds, even of those species that feed very largely upon fishes? William Brewster informs me that he has eaten young of both Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers and found them very good; the old birds he found tough and undesirable but not fishy. Dr. A. K. Fisher has tasted Mergansers of all three of our native species and reports that none of them tasted fishy. E. A. Preble agrees with this, but remembers that an adult Loon he tried was very bad and of a flavor he would call fishy. Vernon Bailey says that in his experience Mergansers have a rank but not fishy taste, and that the Hooded Merganser in fall is as delicious as any duck. Dr. Fisher has eaten both Hell-divers and Eared Grebes and found neither of them fishy. The writer's experience is the same; the latter has tested terns also and found them with a strong flavor like salted and smoked meat but not fishy. Mr. Preble has found young Gulls very palatable. Dr. Fisher gives the same finding for Razor-billed Auks and Murres. Bitterns are reported excellent by Messrs. Bailey and Brewster, the latter stating that one baked in a pit, was the most delicious bird he ever ate. The little Green Heron and Night Heron are favorably reported upon by Dr. Fisher. The Night Herons, or 'Gros-becs' as they are known in the region are a prized delicacy among the Louisiana Creoles. Mr. Brewster found Kingfishers very good.

Now all of the birds above mentioned feed more or less extensively upon fishes, the approximate proportion of their diet consisting of fish being indicated in the following list: Grebes 25%, Loons 80%, Razor-billed Auk and Murres 60%, Gulls 50%, Terns 75%, Hooded Merganser 25%, other Mergansers 90%, Bittern 15%, Little Green Heron 40%, Night Heron 40%, and Kingfisher 75%. It is thus perfectly evident that even habitual feeding upon fishes to a large proportion of the total subsistence, does not necessarily cause a fishy flavor in the flesh of the predator.

A fact that has a converse bearing upon the argument is that a definitely fishy flavor exists in various media with which fishes have no connection. For instance water in wells and even in large reservoirs and lakes sometimes has a pronounced fishy taste. Public opinion attributes this to the influence of fishes in these bodies of water; the real cause however, is the presence of certain algae in great abundance.<sup>1</sup> The development of a fishy flavor has been observed in milk and butter and seems to be due to chemical or bacterial changes when these products have an abnormally high acidity.<sup>2</sup> These cases establish the fact that fishy flavor does not necessarily result from contamination from fishes.

From the facts adduced it appears that: (1) certain individual birds of species not habitual fish eaters have their flesh tainted by a flavor which popularly is called "fishy," but that, (2) habitual fish-eating birds do not necessarily taste fishy nor do the products of animals fed upon fish-meal,

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<sup>1</sup> See Bull. 64, U. S. Bur. Plant Industry, 1904, 44 pp.

<sup>2</sup> See Circ. 146, U. S. Bur. Animal Industry, 1909, 20 pp., and Research Bull. 38, Iowa Agr. Exp. Sta. 1917, pp. 235-246.

as milk, butter, eggs and meat, and finally (3) a distinctly fishy flavor is evident in water, milk and butter under circumstances that preclude its being derived from fishes. I conclude therefore that the occasional so-called fishy bird probably does not taste thus because it has been feeding upon fishes. More probably the flavor of its flesh results from the physiological condition of the individual bird.<sup>1</sup> It may be due to by-products of the breaking down of fat, the reserve upon which such an individual has made great drafts, and the process may be similar to what takes place in fishy butter.—W. L. McATEE, *Washington, D. C.*

**Cinnamon Teal (*Querquedula cyanoptera*) in North Dakota.**—In the course of investigations of the wildfowl of North Dakota the writer was fortunate enough to find a pair of Cinnamon Teals (*Querquedula cyanoptera*) on June 15, 1918, in a slough adjoining Cherry Lake, Kidder County, in the south central part of the State. These birds were in the same pond with a number of Blue-winged Teals; were evidently mated; and were without much doubt breeding in the immediate vicinity. The locality is some three or four miles west of the northern end of Horsehead Lake, which is one of the largest lakes of the immediate region. So far as we are aware there is no other authentic summer record for the Cinnamon Teal in North Dakota.—HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

**White-winged Scoter (*Oidemia deglandi*) in South Carolina.**—A mature male of his species was taken by me on January 31, 1918, on the eastern branch of Cooper River. The water was perfectly fresh and no unusual weather conditions existed. The specimen was alone, flying quite low and vigorously. No others have been seen by me either then or at any other time.—E. A. SIMONS, *Charleston, S. C.*

**The Specific Name of the Glossy Ibis.**—The Glossy Ibis is commonly known scientifically as *Plegadis autumnalis* (Linnæus) (*Tringa autumnalis* LINNÆUS, in Hasselquist, *Reise Paläst.*, 1762, p. 306. [Egypt]). Since, however, Hasselquist's *Reise Palästina* is merely a translation of the same book in Latin published prior to 1758, the scientific names it contains are undoubtedly untenable, according to the International Code of Nomenclature, as interpreted by Opinion 57 of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. If this be satisfactory as a guide for our North American ornithological nomenclature, as we think it should be, we must change the name of the Glossy Ibis from *Plegadis autumnalis* (Linnæus) to *Plegadis falcinellus* (Linnæus) (*Tantalus falcinellus* LINNÆUS, *Syst. Nat.*, ed. 12, I, 1766, p. 241), as already shown by Mr. G. M. Mathews (*Birds of Australia*, III, pt. 5, 1914, pp. 396-397).—HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that animals in poor order often have a rank taste.