

### GENERAL NOTES.

**Little Auk at Sand Bridge, Southeastern Virginia.**—On January 20, 1923, the day being cloudy and calm, temperature 24° Fahrenheit, we noticed a small bird in our yard quite near the house. We readily captured it and no one present being able to identify it I determined to send it, alive if possible, to the Biological Survey at Washington.

We attempted to feed it with duck food, pheasant food bread crumbs, seeds and the like, but it refused everything. We put food into its bill but it would not swallow it. It was very gentle, not at all frightened and rather liked being stroked. We put it in a tub of water and it enjoyed itself immensely and I think if we had known what food to float on the surface of the water the bird would have eaten it.

We did our best to keep it alive but on the third day it died, when we sent it up to the Biological Survey and I am now informed that the bird was the Dovekie or Little Auk, *Alle alle*.

The day after its capture we saw another nearby at our boat house, evidently far away from its northern home but we made no attempt to take it.—J. C. O'CONNOR, 24 E. Thirty-third St., New York. N. Y.

**Razor-billed Auk in North Carolina.**—On January 29, 1923 Mr. Charles M. B. Cadwalader shot a female Razor-billed Auk (*Alca torda*) on Currituck Sound, N. C. The specimen is now in the collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia—WITMER STONE, *Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*

**Double-crested Cormorant at Waterford, N. Y.**—On May 16, 1921, a Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax d. dilophus*) was seen on the Mohawk River three miles west of Waterford, N. Y. The bird was seen clearly; first on the water, then in its peculiar flight. I am familiar with the Cormorants of the Atlantic coast and Florida.

Out of thirteen fall records given by Eaton (Birds of New York) two are from this same locality! Lansingburgh, November 13, 1879 and Troy, September 21, 1888. The three localities mentioned being only three miles apart—really one city.

The weather conditions were normal; clear, with a strong west wind.—EDGAR BEDELL, *Waterford, N. Y.*

**Field Identification of Ducks.**—Mr. Ludlow Griscom's 'Field Studies of the Anatidae,' in the last two numbers of 'The Auk,' are of great value and interest, but I venture to add two or three points that seem to me of value in the recognition of these birds in the field.

The female Merganser can be distinguished at a considerable distance from the female Red-breasted Merganser by the white throat patch or

"bib" which is clearly defined and pure white in the former, but indistinct and shading gradually into the darker color of the lower throat in the latter species. Mr. Griscom alludes to this but lays more stress on the color of the rest of the head and neck.

Mr. Griscom states that the greenish gloss of the Greater Scaup and the purplish gloss of the Lesser Scaup can be made out at a maximum distance of 100 feet. It is true that the heads and necks of these ducks usually look black, but, under favorable conditions with the sun full upon them, I have often distinguished these iridescent colors with eight power binoculars at many times that distance.

In the case of the Ring-necked Duck, I agree with Mr. Griscom that the chestnut ring is not a good field mark, as it does not contrast sharply with the other colors of the neck and is not seen at all unless the neck is stretched up. The markings on the bill are very characteristic, but I have found that the white triangle in front of the bend of the wing is also an excellent field mark, for this is lacking in the Lesser Scaup.

In the Barrow's Golden-eye the elongated crescentic white spots on the head of the adult male are, of course, diagnostic, but this bird can be distinguished at a great distance from the American Golden-eye, by the fact that, while the latter bird shows a great deal of white on the wings and flanks as it swims on the water, the Barrow's Golden-eye looks dark in comparison, as there are only four or five white spots or squares on the wing coverts. I have picked out the latter bird at a considerable distance with the naked eye, in a flock of American Golden-eyes, by this method and subsequently confirmed the diagnosis by studying the markings, on the side of the head. The bill of the Barrow's is noticeably smaller and the feet, which may be seen under favorable conditions, are pale yellow and not orange-colored as in the adult male American Golden-eye.

The study of the Scoters' varying plumages is a long and fascinating one and, at times, a confusing one. For example, in certain plumages the Surf Scoter may have a white lower breast and belly and black head and upper breast, and suggest a Scaup. On the other hand this species may suggest an American Scoter by having full black plumage lacking the white brow and nape spots, or the latter may alone show very faintly only when the bird stretches its neck. The color of the bill distinguishes the two species. White-winged Scoters, although usually showing a little white on the wing when swimming on the water, may so dispose the wings that this is invisible even at close range and the distinction from the American Scoter must be made by the white spot under the eye of the White-winged and the red rather than the yellow bill.

Most of these points are to be found in Memoir III and Memoir IV of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, 'The Birds of Essex County,' 1905, and the 'Supplement' 1920.—CHARLES W. TOWNSEND, 98 *Pinckney St., Boston.*