

on the outer feather; 56 birds had the white only on the outer feather, 71 on the outer two, 28 on three feathers, three on the outer four rectrices, and three on the outer five. In none was the white mark on the first rectrix over, or much over, one centimeter in length. The involvement of the adjoining feathers decreased markedly. Exact sketches were made of the size, shape, and amount of the white areas in all tail feathers of the 162 Robins. There were no two alike in the proximal outline of the main spot. Only eight of these Robins returned to the traps in subsequent years, a return percentage of five, about equal to the general average return of Robins banded at all ages.

One Robin, 39-250343, had the basal three centimeters of all rectrices white—the only such specimen seen. Another, trapped in 1942 and again in 1943, had gray tips to the outer feather, no white on any. Two Robins, trapped, sketched, and banded in 1940 and retrapped in 1941 and 1943, gave excellent opportunity to compare the configuration and extent of the white markings, and three others which made I-returns and II-returns, in each set, also helped in the study. A careful comparison of the drawings, and some collected feathers, showed that by subsequent molts there was no increase in the number of feathers involved in any individual, nor was there any appreciable difference in the shape or in the proximal outline of the white areas. These rectricial white spots in the Eastern Robin are therefore constant in amount, and appear in the first feathers developed.—HAROLD B. WOOD, 3016 North Second St., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

**Extraordinary Fatality to a Blue-winged Teal.**—On March 12, 1944, while looking at water birds on a small pond south of San Antonio, Texas, I noticed a duck hanging from the telephone wires along the highway. Examination showed that the bird, a female Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), had evidently flown through the wires at high speed with its beak open. The open beak had scooped in two wires, and the velocity had been sufficient to split the corners of the teal's mouth open and drive the wires back to the base of the skull. The victim was left hanging from the two wires which were forced into its skull.—MAJOR CLIFFORD PANGBURN, *Randolph Field, Texas.*

**The Woodcock at San Antonio, Texas.**—On March 5, 1944, I was watching a flock of Wilson's Snipe (*Capella delicata*) which were feeding at the edge of a small pond just south of San Antonio. A Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) suddenly appeared from behind a grass clump. It was not more than 50 yards distant in full moonlight, and was easily identifiable through my 8X binoculars.—MAJOR CLIFFORD PANGBURN, *Randolph Field, Texas.*

**Great Black-backed Gull kills adult Black Duck.**—It has long been the conviction of some of the old-time duck hunters at Newburyport, Massachusetts, that the Great Black-backed Gull will attack and kill adult Black Ducks. This has seemed incredible, knowing the prowess and swift flight of the Black Duck. Bent, in his 'Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns' (1921), does not mention its taking live waterfowl other than young eiders on the breeding grounds. Forbush, in his 'Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States' (1929), reports from his own observations and those of others that the Black-back kills Dovekies and other small birds, young ducklings, and American Coots, and has been known to carry off full-grown scoters.

On numerous occasions Black-backs have been observed by myself and others molesting Black Ducks, but only recently did I witness the complete performance of attacking and killing. On January 21, 1943, C. H. Richardson, of Newburyport, reported seeing a Black-backed Gull feeding on a Black Duck in Newburyport Harbor. On February 17, 1943, I witnessed an adult Black-back commencing to feed on a freshly killed Black Duck at the mouth of the Merrimac River. Both duck and gull were seen floating down the channel toward the sea. The duck was on its back when first seen and the gull was commencing to pull out the breast feathers. On April 28, 1944, Kenneth Aylward and myself witnessed a group of Black-backs single out and kill a Black Duck from a flock of several hundred birds at Newburyport. The episode may be of sufficient interest to warrant some detail.

It was a clear day with a strong northeast wind, and the tide was nearly out, exposing extensive areas of mud flats in the harbor area. At approximately 10 A. M., several Black-backed Gulls were observed chasing and swooping at various Black Ducks wherever there were sizable concentration. Suddenly an adult gull struck a Black Duck and apparently injured it to the extent that it never attempted to fly from its attackers. In subsequently trying to elude the gulls, the duck would swim away or merely flap along the water surface. For twenty-five minutes to a half hour the original attacker and five to seven other Black-backs (adults and immatures) continually harassed the duck. On at least four occasions, both adult and immature gulls were observed to swoop down on the duck, seize it by the neck, lift it several feet off the water, and carry it a few yards before dropping the struggling bird. The original adult attacker, however, was more persistent in pursuing the duck, striking the bird with its heavy bill and apparently grasping it firmly by the back over the lungs. The strong hooked bill of the gull may have pierced the duck's body at this vulnerable point, causing damage to the internal organs.

Within half an hour, the Black Duck was dead and the adult gull began to feed. Seven other Black-backs, both adults and immatures, were present and had to be driven off on numerous occasions by the old gull. The adult gull fed voraciously for two hours until 12:25 P. M. It was then that a near-by immature Black-back was permitted to feed on the remains.

The duck carcass was immediately retrieved. Most of the meat of the breast and legs and the internal organs, with the exception of the heart and portions of lungs, were consumed. The head was not eaten. The bird was a male Black Duck and the remains weighed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. This type of duck averages close to 3 pounds at Newburyport so that the gull consumed about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds during the single feeding.

The duck was in apparent good health although several primary feathers were missing from the right wing when the partially eaten bird was examined. These feathers appeared to have been recently lost, but it is not definitely known whether the gulls were responsible.

It has been observed that when a Black-backed Gull swoops low and surprises a Black Duck, the latter skulks or 'spreads out' on the water, thus making an easy prey for the powerful gull.—C. E. ADDY, *Leader, Federal Aid Project 4R, Massachusetts Department of Conservation.*