

GENERAL NOTES

Primary molt in adult male *Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*.—A spring gobbler hunt in New York 6–11 May 1968 provided information on the primary molt. Three adult males (SBU 1090, 1091, 1093) taken that week with beards 10 to 11 inches in length and determined by other criteria to be at least 23 months old (Eaton and Moore, *Sci. Studies*, 23: 25, 1965–66) had started the molt in primaries 1 and 2. These birds had testes 40–50 mm in length and showed much strut wear on the tips of primaries 3 to 10. In the gobbler season 5–11 May 1969 I examined five adult males and saw no sign of molt.

Between these early May dates and 18 September we have little information on the progress of the molt except single primaries dropped by molting toms in the field. On 18 September 1969 in Cattaraugus County, we cannon-netted a flock of five adult toms, two of which were previously banded on 20 September 1965, 16 miles southwest, as immature males. Table 1 shows the variation in the progress of their molt.

TABLE 1
VARIATION IN PRIMARY MOLT OF FIVE ADULT TOMS

Band no.	Length of primary in mm					Weight		Age
	6	7	8	9	10	lb.	oz.	
T 2065	305	192	62	0	strut wear	15	12	4 yr
T 2062	Complete	313	235	61	2	14	12	4 yr
T 2061 ¹	"	310	240	102	8	17	12	Adult
T 2063	"	350	287	187	2	15	8	"
T 2064	"	305	237	121	77	15	5	"

¹ Led flock into baited area.

One other tom taken on 22 September 1961 (SBU 790) showed sheathing or early growth in primaries 1 to 7; primary number 8 was missing and 9 and 10 were of an earlier feather generation and showed strut wear. One adult male (SBU 819) taken 25 October 1962 had grown new primaries but showed much sheathing at the bases of 7 through 10. One taken on 8 November 1963 (SBU 886) showed the molt to be complete, and one taken 17 November 1967 (SBU 1085) was complete except for considerable sheathing at the base of primary 10.

In late January 1967 and 1968 I accompanied a field unit of the New York State Conservation Department, Region 2, led by Frederick Evans when they captured eight adult toms in two different flocks. Four of these had 7 to 38 mm of sheathing at the base of primary 10. Terminal wear from strutting begins about 14 February and reaches a peak in late March and early April as the females begin to ovulate.

From these data it appears that molt extends over a period of 6 months in these northern populations, somewhat longer than the 4 months Leopold suggests (*Condor*, 45: 140, 1943) for the Missouri populations. Of the "prenuptial" molt Leopold mentions in the Missouri birds I found no sign in approximately 20 adult toms Evans trapped in Allegany State Park, Cattaraugus County, during February and March.

The molt does not seem to be activated by decreasing day length, as Bailey suggests (*in The wild Turkey and its management* (O. H. Hewitt, Ed.), *Wildl. Soc.*, 1967), but perhaps by some internal annual rhythm.—STEPHEN W. EATON, *Department of Biology, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York 14778*.