

SUMMARY OF A RECORD OF DUCK SHOOTING ON THE SUISUN MARSH

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

By EMERSON A. STONER

I recently had the privilege of examining a "record of game killed at the Tule Shooting Club", Suisun Marshes, California, during the period from 1885 to 1901, which is in the possession of Mrs. William Foreman of Benicia, California. The late "Bill" Foreman was a hotel-keeper and sportsman, and he prized this journal of early duck-shooting along with his many hunting trophies which are still on exhibition at the Foreman Tavern in Benicia. Entries in the record were carefully made, in ink, of the number of each species of birds killed each day by each member and guest. A total of 20,844 ducks are recorded as having been killed on the grounds of this club during the period indicated.

Mr. M. Hall McAllister, now of Redlands, California, who shot for thirty years on the adjacent Ibis Club, gives the location of the Tule Shooting Club as on Cor-

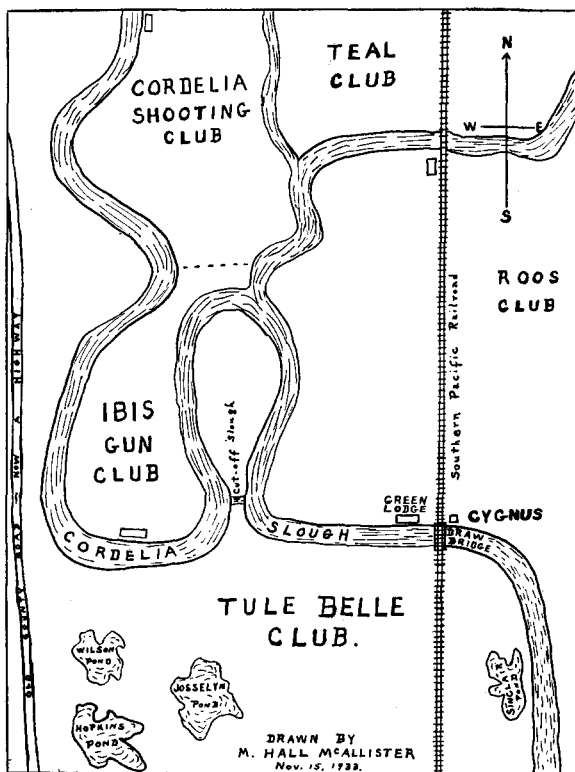


Fig. 22. Sketch showing location of several of the early shooting clubs on the Suisun marshes.

delia Slough at Cygnus. Mr. McAllister kindly prepared for me the accompanying map (fig. 22) showing the location of several of these early clubs, which were established soon after the Southern Pacific Company built their railroad through the marsh in 1876-77. Several San Francisco sportsmen negotiated for and took over

the Thickbroom Ranch near Cygnus, on which the Tule Shooting Club, later known as the Tule-Belle Shooting Club, was organized. The number of members varied in different years; in 1886-87 there were a dozen members, and during later seasons members numbered from four to ten.

Members did not ordinarily "overshoot", and the average bag for each man ran about sixteen birds. The largest bag of ducks for a single hunter at one morning's shoot recorded was 122, by William Tevis, on December 28, 1890. Mr. Foreman passed along the story among local sportsmen, of Mr. and Mrs. Thickbroom's attempts to frighten ducks from this ranch by beating tin pans in an effort to save some of their crop. He also told of three men, by name, bringing in 380 sprig and teal after shooting from 6 to 11:30 a. m. at this place.

The main value of the record, it appears to me, is in the possibilities of summarizing the record in order to find the relative abundance of the different species. This I have done in the tables which follow. The men hunting at this club were experienced sportsmen and I believe that identifications of the different ducks were recorded with fair accuracy. With the exception of the ruddies, as noted below, I believe that the table showing relative abundance as based on the record is a good indication of the relative abundance of the different species, at least at that time.

SUMMARY OF DUCKS KILLED BY THE TULE SHOOTING CLUB FROM THE
FALL OF 1885 TO THE SPRING OF 1901

Season of	Canvas-back	Mallard	Gadwall	Sprig	Widgeon	Spoonbill	Black-jack	Wood Duck	Dufflehead	Teal	Red-head	Golden-eye	Merganser	Ruddy	Total
1885-86	160	106	37	257	372	505	58	2	89	427					2,013
1886-87	10	74	9	281	616	233	4		5	775			1		2,008
1887-88	7	51	4	208	232	322	21	2	13	483		1			1,844
1888-89	459	32	1	471	454	202	149	2	39	397		3	3		2,215
1889-90	429	6		196	189	49	174		23	71				8	1,149
1890-91	30	34		312	523	87	15		50	1,038					2,091
1891-92	43	49	4	571	68	39	15			624	1				1,414
1892-93	1	6	2	87	94	1	10			277					478
1893-94	61	51	7	267	200	69	68	13	1	492					1,229
1894-95	2	15	2	94	98	23	12		2	143					391
1895-96	14	16	5	104	154	24	2		59	338			1		717
1896-97	1	5	2	94	160	26	1	1		106					396
1897-98	2	106	4	230	191	23	1		1	361					919
1898-99	44	88	5	581	447	47	18		55	555			1		1,841
1899-00	143	9	1	922	50	63	59	4	31	57					1,339
1900-01	102	53	20	482	305	146	34		5	203					1,300
Totals	1,508	701	104	5,107	4,153	1,859	641	24	373	6,347	9	4	6	8	20,844

Table showing relative abundance of ducks on the Suisun marsh, based on above summary of ducks killed at the Tule Shooting Club:

Teal (Green-winged and Cinnamon).....	30.5
Sprig (Pintail).....	24.5
Widgeon (Baldpate).....	20.0
Spoonbill (Shoveller).....	8.9
Canvas-back	7.2
Mallard	3.4
Black-jack, Blue-bill (Scaup and Ring-neck).....	3.0
Butterball (Bufflehead).....	1.8
Gadwall5
Wood Duck.....	.1
Redhead, Ruddy, Golden-eye and Merganser.....	.1

100.0

I was puzzled as to the scarcity of entries of Ruddy Ducks inasmuch as they are now commonly seen in these marshes. In response to my inquiry, Mr. McAllister writes under date of November 23, 1933, that "the lowly little Ruddy Duck was

classed with the Mudhen and not even bagged in the 'old days'; also they never came in flocks but in small bunches of two and four".

Teal were listed without separating the Green-winged from the Cinnamon. The great majority, of course, were Green-winged, the Cinnamon, besides never being especially abundant in these marshes, having migrated south prior to the height of the hunting season. McAllister states that during one of the above years (about 1890) "Green-winged Teal were present in countless thousands — like clouds in the sky".

Under the column for "Remarks" are entered data concerning the weather, tides, abundance or scarcity of ducks, and observations such as follows: "Poachers shooting on Ibis and Cordelia by moonlight" (October 25, 1893). "Johnson says Cordelia Club, by moonlight shooting, have scared away the 'cans' from the marsh" (January 17, 1892). "Heavy fall of snow" (January 4, 1887). "Hot as Hades" (February 3, 1891). "Members should kill all the mudhens they can as they are great destroyers of feed. They eat three or four times as much as the ducks" (December 6, 1895).

Shore-birds were recorded, but these were not analysed inasmuch as the records show only indefinite identification, such as snipe, plover and curlew. Geese recorded during the period are 394 Snow Geese, 16 Canada, and 31 White-fronted; 8 swans were reported as killed, this species being legally taken as a game bird at that time.

Benicia, California, December 23, 1933.

WINTER WEIGHTS OF GOLDEN-CROWNED AND FOX SPARROWS

By JEAN M. LINSDALE and E. L. SUMNER, Sr.

During the 1932-1933 winter season, we gathered facts to supplement those already reported (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 40, 1934, pp. 309-320) concerning variability in weight in the Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia coronata*). From September to May, inclusive, 1422 records of weight were obtained for this species. These involved 286 different birds, trapped and banded on the University of California Campus at Berkeley.

Weights of Fox Sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*) trapped along with the Golden-crowned Sparrows were studied also. In all, 711 records were obtained from 91 birds at Berkeley, during the 1932-1933 winter season. These birds were not identified as to sex or subspecies; they belonged, however, to the assemblage of races which nests along the coast of British Columbia and Alaska. Some study of variation in weight in Fox Sparrows has been made already (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 30, 1928, pp. 309-315).

Table 1. Summary of weight records (in grams) of wild Golden-crowned Sparrows trapped at Berkeley, California, in the 1932-1933 winter.

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May
Number weight records.....	2	19	201	50	55	110	542	228	15
Average weight in morning.....	29.35	27.89	28.53	28.27	30.50	28.34	28.41	30.44	33.33
Number birds.....	1	4	48	17	6	55	90	57	6
Average weight at noon.....		27.03	29.69	29.95	30.81	30.04	29.50	31.23	38.03
Number birds.....		4	39	9	20	46	79	26	5
Average weight in afternoon.....	29.30	29.55	29.77	30.06	31.82	30.32	30.85	31.70
Number birds.....	1	9	38	19	21	53	77	28
Average all weights.....	29.33	28.57	29.27	29.36	31.22	29.58	29.52	30.94	35.47
Minimum weight.....	29.30	22.65	23.00	24.40	27.10	11.95	21.15	22.10	29.10
Maximum weight.....	29.35	33.20	35.60	35.25	35.30	37.05	36.50	42.15	41.80

Table 1 was arranged primarily to determine if these records reveal any change in weight that can be correlated with advance in season. To counter-balance as much as possible the uneven representation of individuals and time of day, the average weight of every individual bird was computed for each month, and morning, noon,