

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Ross Goose in the Eastern Arctic.**—As far as the writer is aware, there are no published records of the Ross Goose (*Chen rossii*) in the Canadian eastern arctic. In the summer of 1953, two adult females were trapped, banded and released at the mouth of the Boas River, Southampton Island, District of Keewatin, N.W.T. This is approximately 550 miles southeast of Perry River, the only known breeding grounds. The Perry River breeding grounds were first reported by Gavin in 1940 (Beaver, Dec., 1940:6-9). His popular account was summarized by Taverner (Can. Field-Nat., 4, 1940:128-130). More recently the area has been re-investigated by Scott, Hanson and Queneau (Rept. Arctic Institute North America, 1949:1-5).

The Ross Geese banded in 1953 were captured accidentally during the course of a banding drive for Blue Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) and Snow Geese (*Chen hyperborea*) while these were undergoing their postnuptial molt. In the past two seasons a total of 30,000 geese, including retrapped birds, have been handled in the pens (Cooch, Jour. Wildl. Mgt., 17, 1953:460-465). In addition nearly 5000 nesting pairs have been examined, but no indication of the presence of Ross Geese was previously obtained. Sutton (Mem. Carneg. Mus. II, Sect. 2, 1932:1-275), Manning (Auk, 59, 1942:158-175), and Bray (Auk, 60, 1943:504-536) did not find Ross Geese on the island. In addition, the Eskimos of Southampton Island have no name for this goose. This can be taken as good evidence that the bird is a recent arrival or a vagrant in the area, as the Eskimos have names for all other species of birds and mammals on the island. The work done in 1952 and 1953 was concentrated near the coast, which was the area occupied by the greatest number of nesting geese. Both of the Ross Geese were taken during banding drives which extended twice as far inland as our other activities. This part of the area has numerous small lakes, and the upper reaches of the Boas delta is a maze of islands which could provide suitable habitat for Ross Geese.

All species of geese commonly nesting at Boas River undergo a differential postnuptial molt. Nonbreeding subadults (yearlings), begin their molt at the time when goslings are hatching. They have regained power of flight when the successful breeding adults enter their molt. Adult birds which did not nest molt with the subadults, while those which had lost their nests molt at an intermediate time. Thus, banding drives made for adults and their broods do not capture nonbreeding birds. If the same type of molt phenology occurs in the Ross Goose (Scott, *et al.*), the birds which were trapped by us would be considered as having bred. The unburst primary sheaths on both birds were less than 15 mm. in length, indicating that the primaries had been dropped within the week. This compares favorably with measurements made on the other species of *Chen*. This is not conclusive evidence that the Ross Geese were breeding. However, a few moments before the first adult was discovered, an "aberrant" Snow gosling was handled. The writer was unfamiliar with the coloration of downy goslings of the Ross Goose. This particular bird was noted because of its small size and the yellow head with a grayish body. Although Lesser Snow Goose goslings are quite polymorphic, none has ever been noted with this particular pattern.

Migration records of the Ross Goose east of Saskatchewan are rare. Seton (Auk, 25, 1908:450-454) mentions one shot at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, in September, 1902. Macoun (Catalogue of Canad. Birds, 1909) calls the species rare at Churchill River. There are a few unpublished kill records from Manitoba in the past 30 years. McAtee (Auk, 27, 1910:337-339) reports a specimen taken at the mouth of the Vermilion River, Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, February 10, 1910. He also reports specimens taken in Chihuahua, Mexico. As far as is known the Ross Goose has never been reported from James Bay. On October 13, 1953, the writer was presented with an adult female which had just been shot by a Cree Indian. Upon further questioning it was learned that this man had killed two birds like it in 1939. This specimen is now in the collection of Constable Paul Holmes, R.C.M.P. It was interesting to note that the adult female shot in James Bay in October, 1953, was taken from a "family" group of Blue Geese. The other adult bird in this flock was killed and proved to be an adult male Blue Goose. The young were all of the Blue Goose type.

Thus, in 1953 three definite records of the Ross Goose occurring near Hudson and James bays were obtained. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Arctic Institute, the Office of Naval Research and the Canadian Wildlife Service for providing funds in support of this study.—GRAHAM COOCH, *Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, Ontario, February 19, 1954.*