

## FIELD NOTES

**An apparent feeding of an eastern painted turtle on a dead Mallard:** During the late morning of 11 July 1971, John M. Burnley and I observed a dead female Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) in a small pond about 800 feet W of Tarkill Road in Brookhaven Township, Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. Something was evidently causing the carcass of the Mallard, floating breast upward in the water, to move. As we watched the body of the duck and the murky water surrounding it a turtle protruded its head above the surface of the water next to the carcass. We could not see the shell of the turtle because of the uncleanness of the water but did identify it on the basis of its head pattern as an Eastern Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta picta*).

The Painted Turtle probably came upon the duck as the bird lay dead in the pond and began eating it as the turtle would any suitable carrion. That the Painted Turtle had killed the Mallard seems quite improbable. Adult *C.p. picta* average 4-12 to 6 inches long (Conant, 1958); the maximum known size of this turtle is 7-18 inches (Conant, 1958; Nichols and DeSola, 1933). Even a maximum-sized Painted Turtle would probably be too small and weak to overcome and kill a Mallard.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Conant, Roger. 1958. A field guide to reptiles and amphibians of the United States and Canada east of the 100th meridian. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 366 p.
- Nichols, John T., and C. Ralph De Sola. 1933. The probable size maximum of *Chrysemys picta picta* (Schneider). Copeia 1933:151.
- Frederick C. Schauch, 415 Clift Street, Central Islip, Long Island, New York 11722

**Wood duck presumed nesting in cliff:** I was driving south on the Thruway just south of mile 123 near Climax, N.Y. on June 2, 1971, under a high cliff on the west side. There I was surprised to see a female Wood Duck standing on the gravelly shoulder of the road with a closely packed brood of ten babies. I shooed them north several hundred feet till they found a bank they were able to climb leading into the woods. I saw a hole about 3/4 of the way up the cliff where she had presumably nested. There appeared to be no tree suitable for nesting above the cliff. Audubon mentions a cliff nesting site in Kentucky ("in the fissure of a rock": Bent, A. C. *Life Histories of North American Wildfowl*, p. 160.)

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**Apparent Goldeneye nest at Buffalo New York:** On 18 May 1971, I received a telephone call from Mr. Carl Romane who asked whether we would be interested in some duck eggs in a nest that he had found in Buffalo's south harbor on Lake Erie. Mr. Romane said that he had discovered the eggs a few days earlier in his equipment box under the walkway at his dock in the small boat marina, and not seeing a duck in the vicinity, thought the nest had been deserted.

Upon investigating later that day, I found that the five greenish-colored eggs were in the rear corner on the floor of the open-ended box (interior dimensions .9 × .76 × .76 m). They were in a crude nest composed of various sized wood pieces, a small piece of wax paper, a few small bits of down, and a thin rope lying in a circle among the other objects around the eggs (Figure 1). The box is about 23 meters from shore, almost halfway out the walkway which is paralleled by two others extending into the harbor on each side. As Mr. Romane wished to clean the box, I collected the eggs. They are now in the Buffalo Museum of Science collection. On

that day and several subsequent ones the only ducks I saw in this part of the harbor were two Greater Scaup.

The eggs were fresh and well-refrigerated by floating ice cakes in the water about 1 m below the floor of the box. They measured (mm) as follows:  $57.6 \times 43.1$ ;  $59 \times 44$ ;  $60.4 \times 42.5$ ;  $59.3 \times 42.9$ ;  $58.8 \times 41.6$ ; average —  $59 \times 42.8$ . This average agrees closely with Bent's (*U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.* 130, p. 5, 1925) average measurements of 84 Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) eggs— $59.7 \times 43.4$  mm. Their color, Bent states, is usually a clear, pale "malachite green," varying in the darker specimens to a more olivaceous or "pale chromium green," various shades of color often occurring in the same set. He says that Common Goldeneye eggs are "easily distinguished from those of any other North American duck except... Barrow's Goldeneye."

The Buffalo harbor eggs are clear, essentially alike in color, and closet to the "Pale Fluorite Green" of Ridgway (*Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, published by the author, Washington, D.C., 1912). They agree well in size, shape, and color with the only Common Goldeneye egg in our collection, and differ in color and/or size from eggs of the other North American surface-feeding and diving ducks, except Barrow's Goldeneye. John Bull compared the Buffalo harbor set with eggs in the American Museum of Natural History collection and found that they matched Common Goldeneye eggs quite well in size, shape, and especially color, and differed in color from those of all the mergansers and Wood Duck, as well as Mallard and Black Duck.

According to Bent, the Common Goldeneye ordinarily lays from 8 to 12 eggs, but 5 or 6 sometimes complete the set. Although one of his sources states that this duck's nest "is composed of grasses, leaves, and moss and lined with feathers," Bent says that he has never seen anything but rotten chips and down in a goldeneye's nest, and doubts that any outside material is ever brought in. Bent also mentions that "probably the duck does not always take the trouble to clean out a cavity, but lays its eggs on whatever accumulation of rubbish happens to be there. The down is added as incubation advances..." Although the Common Goldeneye usually nests in tree cavities, in several places it has been known to breed in artificial nesting boxes. The Buffalo harbor equipment box apparently such a location.

It is unfortunate that no goldeneye was seen associated with these eggs, so one can only speculate on what might have occurred. Common Goldeneyes winter on the Niagara River in varying numbers. They can often be seen courting in spring on the river and, when the ice breaks up, in Buffalo harbor and Lake Erie. The spring of 1970 was generally a late one for bird migration. May average temperature was below normal and ice remained in eastern Lake Erie until late in the month. The small boat harbor where the goldeneye eggs were located was frozen until April when some ice breakup occurred and it partially opened. During the first half of May shifting winds and perhaps currents brought numerous ice floes back into the harbor and under the walkways. It is possible that a goldeneye, perhaps influenced by the cool weather and ice conditions, found this equipment box and laid these eggs in it when the harbor was partly free of ice. In May the return of the ice might have forced the duck from the area, as it did other waterfowl I noted there earlier. Also, sporadic visits to the walkways by boat owners may have disturbed the goldeneye and caused it to abandon the eggs. Considering the fact that Common Goldeneyes are frequently kept in captivity in zoos and aviaries, and that there are many persons in this region holding permits to propagate waterfowl, it is also possible that these eggs were deposited by an escaped bird. It is interesting to note relative to this occurrence that diving ducks of several species, including Common Goldeneye, remained on Lake Erie in above normal numbers into the latter half of May in 1970; also, more individuals than usual were recorded subsequently in the summer here, including Common Goldeneye and six other species.

Of course, Barrow's Goldeneye, whose eggs are similar to those of the Common, is a possibility to be considered because it breeds in tree cavities and is kept in captivity. However, its extreme rarity in this area would seem to make very remote the chance of a wild individual laying these eggs. Whatever the circumstances, it seems clear that a goldeneye, probably a Common Goldeneye, laid five eggs in this harbor in 1970, most likely in April or early May. To my knowledge, this is the first record of such an occurrence in the Niagara Frontier Region. Godfrey (*The Birds of Canada*, p. 70, 1966) states that the Common Goldeneye breeds south in southern Ontario at least to Orillia, about 210 km north of Buffalo. The species is also known to breed in the Adirondack Mountains in New York State. John Bull, author of the forthcoming book on New York State birds, knows of no authentic breeding record for this species in the state outside of these mountains, and is unaware of its eggs ever having been taken in the wild in New York State. Therefore, I have reported what is known of this occurrence for the sake of the record.

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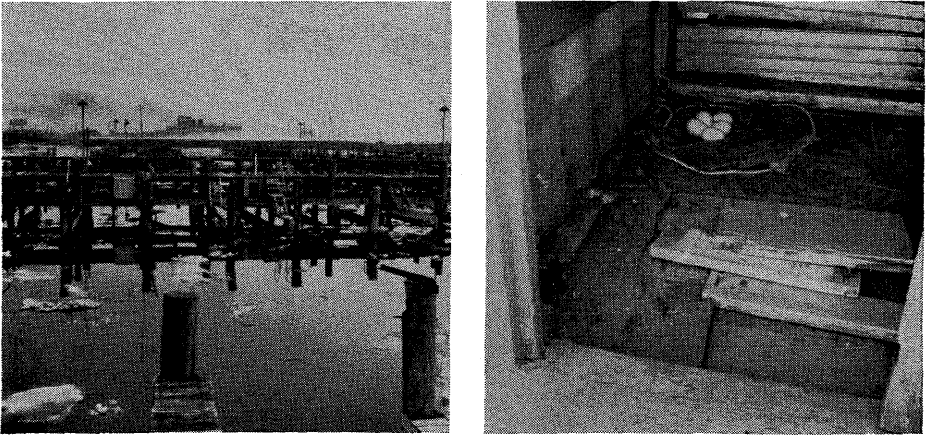


Figure 1. Left: goldeneye nest location in Buffalo harbor (nest box in center of picture); right: interior of box with nest and eggs.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

F. G. SCHEIDER

Summer was wet, wet, wet,—how much wetness depended on whether your sector was hit by the various east coast storms but upstate areas had every marsh and pond brimming and streams in July ran like April freshets. Most areas suffered from excessive heat also and the absence of cold fronts in early August undoubtedly accounts for the lack of any appreciable fall migration prior to August 15. The U.S. Fish and Wild-