

BANDING OF WILD DUCKS

The practice of attaching small numbered rings on to the legs of birds, for the purpose of learning about their life history, has been practised in Europe since the end of the last century. Informative and intimate details have been learnt about such things as migration habits, dispersal, life span, homing tendencies and the like. This information, obtained in such a way, is a sound basis for conservation plans for maintaining a large population.

Early in November, 1951, the Department, on the recommendation of the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee, decided to embark on a wild duck banding programme in this State. A sub-committee comprising Dr. D. L. Serventy and Mr. A. R. Tomlinson with the Chief Warden of Fauna, Mr. A. J. Fraser, as chairman, was appointed to draw up the programme. Mr. J. Traynor, Fauna Warden, was given the arduous task of carrying out all field operations.

On the arrival from England of 3,000 aluminium rings, each bearing a serial number and an inscription "Return to Fisheries Department, Perth", a banding test was made at Queen's Gardens, Perth, on June 4, 1952. The banding programme commenced officially on June 24, 1952, when the Minister for Fisheries (Mr. A. V. R. Abbott, M.L.A.) placed ring number 1071 on the leg of a black duck. It is not certain whether it was the pathetic look in the eye of the duck or the keen interest he has always taken in our fauna, but Mr. Abbott offered a reward of one guinea for the return of this ring (with the duck attached) to the Department. Since then several persons have been disappointed to learn that the reward is limited to that one ring.

To date approximately six hundred ducks have been banded at Queen's Gardens, Lake Karrinyup, Yanchep, Wardering Lake, Narrikup, Meralup, Wansborough and Big Bootine Swamp, Beermullah. Full particulars of the numbers and species ringed and the recoveries to date are shown on page 105.

In pioneering work of this nature many difficulties have to be overcome and perfection in trapping operations may only be attained on the basis of trial and error. Each locality has its own peculiarities

and the success or failure of taking ducks in their native environment must to a large extent depend upon the initiative and ingenuity of the operator. We are indeed fortunate in having such ideal places as Queen's Gardens, Yanchep and the Lake Karrinyup Country Club, which are in close proximity to the city, for trapping stations. Experience here has shown that most difficulties in an extensive banding programme are encountered in establishing trapping stations in country districts.

Different types of traps have been used with varying results. The timber-frame trap covered with 2" mesh netting with a front door hinged for springing was discarded in favour of an iron-frame collapsible funnel trap covered with similar netting. The latter type proved more effective and did not subject the birds to the injuries caused by the spring door of the timber-frame trap. The iron-frame funnel trap attached to a wooden float has also been tried with moderate success. At Wardering Lake, 15 miles west-north-west of Woodanilling, Warden Traynor constructed a trap by driving sapling stakes into the bed of the lake and covering the area with wire netting. A large number of ducks were subjected to the indignity of having a ring attached their legs, and it is certain that Warden Traynor, by the time he had finished, was as wet as the proverbial shag. Photos of the traps will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.

At Queen's Gardens, where the ducks are fed a daily ration of bran and pollard, little difficulty was experienced in enticing them to enter the traps for food. In other places the best results have been obtained by sprinkling liberal quantities of wheat in and around the traps. That the ducks are not to any great extent affected by handling or by ringing has been proved by the number of birds that have re-entered the traps. One young bird put in an appearance on five consecutive days.

Trapping results to date may be considered very satisfactory. In New Zealand during the initial year of similar operations 47 birds only were captured. The success of the field work in this State is due, it is believed, to the policy of the Department in placing that work under the supervision of one officer and to the enthusiasm of that officer. Warden Traynor is doing an excellent job, and there is still more hard work to be done if the desired results are to be achieved.

Particulars of the rings returned to the Department are shown on page 106. The return of rings is a very important part of the banding programme, and as much publicity as possible should be given by the staff generally to this matter. The ultimate success of the banding operations will depend upon the co-operation of the sporting public in returning all rings found forthwith to the Department, together with information as to the species of duck and where and when it was shot.

DUCKS BANDED IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA FROM JUNE 4, 1952,
TO MARCH 24, 1953.

Locality	Species							Total Banded
	Black Duck	Mallard Cross	Moor Hen	Coot	Mountain Duck	Grey Teal	Blue Bold Coot	
Queen's Gardens	258	9	4	4				275
Meralup near Dumbleyung					4			4
Wansbrough near Tambellup					11			11
Narrikup	10							10
Yanchep	87							87
Wardering Lake Woodanilling	11					110		121
Karrinyup Lake Perth	43			6		29		78
Big Bootine Swamp 15 miles N.W. Gingin	33					65	2	100
TOTAL:	442	9	4	10	16	204	2	686

Repeats 134

Total Ducks Trapped 820

BANDING OPERATIONS

Recovery of Rings to March 24, 1953.

No.	Date Ringed	Place where Ringed	Date of Recovery	Place where Recovered	Distance Travelled
<u>BLACK DUCK</u>					
1105	21.1.53 7 p.m.	Queen's Gardens Perth	2.2.53	Avon River near Northam	50 miles
1316	31.1.53	Yanchep	8.2.53	10 miles south of Fremantle	50 "
1097	21.1.53 9 a.m.	Queen's Gardens Perth	8.2.53	Gillingarra, Moore River	68 "
1190	22.1.53 8 a.m.	Queen's Gardens Perth	8.2.53	Avon River, Burgess Siding	56 "
1351	12.2.53	Wardering Lake, 15 miles WNW Woodanilling	15.2.53	10 miles N.E. of Kojonup	10 "
1280	27.1.53	Yanchep	19.2.53	Yunderup	71 "
1457	24.2.53	Karrinyup Lake, Balcatta	1.3.53	half way between Wanneroo & Bulls- brook, commonly known as half way springs	12 "
1276	27.2.53	Yanchep	3.3.53 6.30p.m.	25 miles north of Perth (Wanneroo district)	18 "
1211	23.1.53	Queen's Gardens Perth	18.3.53	Swamp between Kelmscott and Forrestdale	20 "
<u>GREY TEAL</u>					
1339	12.2.53	Wardering Lake	21.3.53	Capel Lakes	100 miles