

## WHITE-WINGED SCOTER RECORDS FROM WHEELER RESERVOIR

THOMAS Z. ATKESON

When A. H. Howell's BIRDS OF ALABAMA was written, over 30 years ago, only the Surf Scoter was known in Alabama. More recently there have been good coastal sight records for all three scoter species, the Common or American Scoter, the Surf Scoter and the White-winged Scoter, but the only interior scoter records come from Wheeler reservoir. The permanent bird files of the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, kept for 20 years, show three records of the White-winged Scoter in the Decatur locality.

On December 21, 1942, John H. Steenis, a Research Biologist of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Paul Bryan, of TVA's Fish and Game Division, were making hunter bag checks near Harris Station. This lies a short distance west of U. S. highway 31 and is now a part of the Swan Creek Public Hunting Area. The two came upon a hunter who had just shot a duck that he was unable to identify. Steenis and Bryan examined the bird carefully and checked it against reference books. They pronounced it a female White-winged Scoter.

On the same date, Ernest Holland, then Assistant Manager of the Wheeler Refuge and now Manager of the Kentucky Woodlands Refuge, Golden Pond, Kentucky, saw a single White-winged Scoter in the Flint Creek embayment. Holland had worked along the Atlantic Coast and was familiar with the species.

On November 2, 1954, David C. Hulse, the waterfowl artist, found a lone female White-winged Scoter swimming in the Decatur Boat Harbor. He watched the bird for some time through good 8 x 40 binoculars, part of the time at a distance of no more than 30 yards.

The birds seen by Steenis, Bryan, and Hulse were in the southern edge of Limestone County, the one seen by Holland in the northern edge of Morgan County.

So far as is known, these are the only three non-coastal scoter records for the State, but the White-winged Scoter nests in the Canadian Northwest, migrates overland to salt water and can be expected to occur occasionally on the larger bodies of fresh water throughout Alabama.

Decatur, Alabama  
April 2, 1958

## GOLDENEYE, OLD SQUAW, AND GREATER SCAUP RECORDS FROM WHEELER RESERVOIR

THOMAS Z. ATKESON

Those familiar with the Tennessee Valley Authority impoundments of northern Alabama have little doubt that the creation of this 150,000 surface acres of water has had a marked effect on bird life. These reservoirs were completed in the mid 1930's and have attracted many water-loving birds that either never occurred previously in this part of the State or were rare. The establishment of the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in 1938 certainly added to the attractiveness that these acres of open water and mudflat and miles of shoreline have for the various water birds. The bulk of the information in Howell's BIRDS OF ALABAMA was gathered prior to 1920, and the book does not list goldeneyes, old squaws, and greater scaups as occurring in any section of the State except the Gulf Coast. While never common, all three are found at least occasionally, in the Tennessee River reservoirs.

A few goldeneyes visit Wheeler Reservoir each fall and winter. Wheeler Refuge employees have recorded these as early as November 18 and as late as April 24, although they are most common in late fall and in winter. Specimens have never been collected, but these birds are occasionally shot by hunters in the open backwater west of the refuge.

A few old squaws may occur each winter but, if so, are lost to observation in the mass of other waterfowl. Wheeler Refuge records list only six occurrences, ranging from single birds to a flock of five. The earliest date noted in October 24 and the latest January 29.

On January 15, 1957, David Hulse, the waterfowl artist, hunting near Finley Island, shot a male old squaw. A study skin was prepared and is now in the University of Alabama collection.

Lesser scaup, in fair numbers, are found in the Tennessee River backwaters each fall and winter. A few greater scaup are probably mixed regularly in these flocks, but escape notice. Sight identification cannot be trusted, and records have come on those rare occasions when dead or trapped birds fell into the hands of qualified observers. The refuge files list only five greater scaup occurrences. The first came on November 30, 1944, when John Steenis, a research biologist

of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, examined one that had been caught in the refuge banding trap. The second record came on November 17, 1954, when State Biologist Francis X. Leuth examined one that had been shot by a hunter in the Swan Creek Public Hunting Area. Shortly afterwards, on November 22, Hulse shot another near the same locality. The latest records came in 1958, when Hulse again shot one of the birds in the backwater west of the refuge on December 2, and again on December 9, when he examined two males shot in the same vicinity by Ross Williams, of Decatur.

No greater scaup study skins have been prepared, but wings are preserved at the refuge office. Identifications have been based not only on size, but also on length of wing stripes, head color, and measurements of nails of bills.

Decatur, Alabama  
March 2, 1959

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, ALABAMA, 1958

THOMAS A. IMHOF

December 20, Birmingham (B). Partly cloudy, temp. 40-50, wind W. 8 m.p.h. then N.W. 0-12, 18 observers in 6 parties, 56½ party-hours, 80 species, 11,556 individuals.

December 27, Dauphin Island (D). Heavy overcast, foggy at times, rain to drizzle in early morning and late afternoon, sun shone about 5 minutes around 2 P.M., temp. 40-50, wind N.E. 0-20 m.p.h., 11 observers in 4 parties, 39 party-hours, 120 species, 11,144 individuals.

Species	B	D	Species	B	D
Common Loon	4	34	Turkey	1	---
Horned Grebe	3	62	Clapper Rail	---	44
Pied-billed Grebe	134	15	Virginia Rail	---	4
White Pelican	---	2	Sora	---	12
Brown Pelican	---	14	Am. Coot	675	---
Double-cr. Cormorant	---	1100	Am. Oystercatcher	---	1
Great Blue Heron	1	24	Semipalmated Plover	---	45
Little Blue Heron	---	14	Piping Plover	---	75
Reddish Egret	---	2	Killdeer	341	12
Snowy Egret	---	2	Black-bellied Plover	---	68
Louisiana Heron	---	19	Ruddy Turnstone	---	52
Black-cr. Night Heron	---	1	Common Snipe	94	1
Blue Goose	---	21	Willet	---	10
Mallard	12	---	Greater Yellowlegs	---	19
Black Duck	6	3	Knot	---	1
Gadwall	---	1	Dunlin	---	375
Pintail	---	1	Short-b. Dowitcher	---	85
Am. Widgeon	1	---	Semipalmated Sandpiper	---	20
Wood Duck	2	---	Western Sandpiper	---	150
Redhead	6	---	Sanderling	---	20
Ring-necked Duck	135	125	Herring Gull	---	500
Canvasback	78	---	Ring-billed Gull	1	330
Greater Scaup	---	45	Laughing Gull	---	157
Lesser Scaup	27	241	Forster's Tern	---	73
Am. Goldeneye	---	274	Royal Tern	---	155
Bufflehead	---	1	Caspian Tern	---	212
Oldsquaw	---	1	Unidentified gulls and terns	---	400
Common Scoter	---	1	Mourning Dove	174	27
Common Merganser	---	8	Ground Dove	---	1
Red-breasted Merganser	---	55	Barn Owl	---	2
Unidentified Ducks	200	1000	Screech Owl	1	---
Turkey Vulture	1	3	Chuck-will's-widow	---	1
Black Vulture	---	63	Belted Kingfisher	11	44
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	---	Yellow-s. Flicker	71	10
Cooper's Hawk	3	---	Pileated Woodpecker	11	---
Red-tailed Hawk	4	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	23	33
Red-shouldered Hawk	7	4	Red-headed Woodpecker	17	1
Marsh Hawk	---	3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	16	11
Osprey	---	1	Hairy Woodpecker	7	---
Sparrow Hawk	3	17	Downy Woodpecker	26	3
Bob-white	35	10	Red Cockaded Woodpecker	7	---