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Molting Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) in Louisiana

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Molting Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) in Louisiana.—In October, 1962, 18 flightless female Gadwalls were found in an impounded coastal marsh on the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Louisiana. I captured 2; both were adults in the post-nuptial molt with primaries in the blood quill stage.

The impoundment was checked in October, 1963, but no flightless ducks were found.

On 26 October 1964, I rechecked the impoundment and found 32 flightless Gadwalls. Again, all were adult females and in the post-nuptial molt. I captured 7 and held them in a large pen until they regained flight; 5 of the ducks were able to fly by 6 November, but 2 were flightless until 15 November.

Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge is owned by the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission and borders the Gulf of Mexico. Brackish marshes with large shallow ponds comprise most of the area. In 1964, Gadwalls began arriving on the refuge in early October, and by 26 October the study area held 8,000. Gadwalls migrate northward from the refuge in April with practically none remaining on the area during the summer. Gadwalls which winter in Louisiana normally nest in the prairie region of northern United States and southern Canada.

Most ducks go through the post-nuptial molt in the general area where they have nested. Males may travel considerable distances to molt but most females molt in the marshes where they have nested.

H. A. Hochbaum (*The Canvasback on a prairie marsh*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, The Stackpole Co., 1959; pp. 99–140) reported from studies in Manitoba that males of all river ducks, Anatinae, are usually flightless in July, but nesting females molt later and do not go through the flightless period until late July or August. He classified the Gadwall as a late nester and stated that flightless young were seen as late as October. Hochbaum also observed that most river duck hens attend their young until they can fly, then leave them and begin molting. The flightless period during molt lasts from three to four weeks.

Since practically no Gadwalls are found on Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge during the summer, the flightless females found there during October, 1962 and 1964, had probably brought off late broods on the northern nesting grounds, then migrated to the wintering grounds before entering the flightless period of the post-nuptial molt.

T. Leuret (*Ardea*, 40: 75–76, 1952) referred to a similar situation in the Netherlands as "pre-molt migration." He observed a female Gadwall and two female European Widgeons, *Mareca penelope*, molting near Rotterdam and thought that the birds had recently migrated to the area from northern nesting grounds.—ROBERT H. CHABRECK, *Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge, Grand Chenier, Louisiana*.

Hummingbird caught by Sparrow Hawk.—On 2 September 1965, around noon-time (together with Mrs. Mayr and two friends), I was watching through a window a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) feeding on some zinnias, at Lyndeboro, New Hampshire. Suddenly a male Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*) plunged down to the flower bed about a foot away from the hummingbird and with a flash-like sideward movement caught the hummingbird with its feet. It immediately rose steeply and was already about 100 feet high when, within a few seconds, I had reached the outside. The ability of these birds to strike prey on the wing is perhaps greater than known. (See for instance D. Amadon's recent observation of a Sparrow Hawk catching bats, as reported in the News-Letter of the Linnaean Society of New York, XIX, No. 4, September, 1965).—ERNST MAYR, *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts*.