



Foot of Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (5th May, 1961) showing polydactyly.

### **Mallard at sea off the west coast of Ireland**

ON a recent crossing of the North Atlantic from Montreal to Swansea aboard the s.s. "Birmingham City", when about 190 miles west of the south-western Irish coast, I saw two Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* flying round the ship. They were first seen at 18.30 hrs. on 2nd November, 1962, when the ship's position was  $52^{\circ} 15\frac{1}{2}'$  N,  $15^{\circ} 26'$  W. One was a female, the other a male in juvenile or partial eclipse plumage. They flew around the ship many times, occasionally very close, but made no attempt to land on board. They remained for about fifteen minutes before flying astern and being lost from sight in the heavy seas.

The Mallard twice alighted together on the sea near the ship, swimming uneasily until several Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* approached. The Fulmars were very curious about the ducks and on the second occasion about ten Fulmars settled around them, with others still in flight. The Mallard took off, closely followed by all the Fulmars which, however, soon lost interest and resumed criss-crossing the wake.

Stephen E. Chapman