

Feeding association between Shovelers and Little Grebes

DURING the first two weeks of September, 1962, I made at least six early morning visits to a large pool at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, where 15 to 30 Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and two female Shovelers *A. clypeata* were feeding. As they fed by up-ending it seemed as if the Mallards paddled with their feet primarily to maintain a vertical position whereas the Shovelers differed by using their feet vigorously to stir into suspension the sediment from or near the bottom of the pool. Two Little Grebes *Podiceps ruficollis*, an adult and an immature, were close to the Shovelers and eagerly dived into the cloudy water areas made by their active companions. Every time the Shovelers moved to new feeding grounds the grebes followed and sometimes scurried across the water in their eagerness to be near their benefactors. On no occasion did the Little Grebes attempt to associate with the Mallards. The use of Shovelers in this way by grebes does not seem to have been recorded.

Bernard King

Winter feeding behaviour of Red-crested Pochards

ON 17th November, 1962 a pair of Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* and an unattached male were found among at least 400 Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset. The Red-crested Pochard kept close together. During prolonged observation it became apparent that their method of feeding differed markedly from that of their companions. Whereas the latter fed below the surface of the water with some birds making throat-gulping movements immediately on emerging, the *rufina* always brought their food to the surface and then pecked at and swallowed the vegetation as it lay strewn on the water. This food was invariably obtained by the male of the paired Red-crested Pochard and commonly the male, after surfacing, swam close to its mate and so 'drew' her towards the vegetation, which both birds then ate. It was rare for the female to obtain her own, but when she did so she showed no inclination to share it—and nor did the unattached male. E. H. Gillham (*British Birds* 48 : 322-3. 1955) has drawn attention to breeding pairs of Red-crested Pochards, both tame and wild, in a London park, in which the males fed their partners and E. J. M. Buxton (*Wildfowl Trust 13th Ann. Report* : 170. 1962) describes 'courtship feeding' by pinioned and full-winged *rufina* on a private water in Wiltshire. Buxton noted this behaviour at all times from February to June. The Cheddar observations suggest that when individuals remain paired the practice of the male obtaining food and feeding the female may be normal well beyond the nuptial and breeding periods.

Bernard King and Robin Prytherch

Communal diving in turbid water by Red-breasted Mergansers

DEREK MILLS' interesting paper (*Wildfowl Trust 13th Ann. Report* : 79-92. 1962) on the distribution, breeding and feeding behaviour of Goosanders *Mergus merganser* and Red-breasted Mergansers *M. serrator* in Scotland prompted us to make prolonged observations on parties of Red-breasted