

nodule was almost as big as a thrush's egg," and Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), in which the bone marrow was involved.

I am most grateful to Dr. J. E. Wilson, Mr. R. H. Duff and Mr. J. W. Macdonald of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade, Midlothian, for carrying out the post mortems.

Elizabeth A. Garden.

### Pre-dusk gathering of Goldeneye

IN North Somerset, after years of consistent counting, it was found that Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, usually are to be found in their largest numbers during March and early April, although on present standards it is exceptional for fifty or more Goldeneye to be counted on any one occasion.

It was also discovered, especially at Blagdon Reservoir, and then in more recent times at Chew Valley Reservoir, by Stephen Chapman and others, that the species revealed a marked tendency to gather, sometimes on the deepest waters, about an hour or so before dusk, and there to stay in close association—they form into long and irregular lines or bunch closer together, until the oncoming darkness prohibits further observations. For how long these 'rafts' of Goldeneye remain as described is still unknown, but on the few occasions I have made dawn visits to the areas where they have been seen to gather the previous evening the birds were well scattered and, perhaps in consequence, the total numbers were below the pre-dusk counts.

On searching through the British ornithological literature at my disposal, I have failed to find data of a similar nature, although from the following details by James W. Campbell it is evident this communal behaviour is not confined to Somerset. Campbell states (1953—personal comm.) 'There seems to be a tendency with Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Tufted Ducks (*A. fuligula*) and Goldeneye, to collect an hour or so before dusk and then I think shift at flight time. I first became interested in this in Benbecula where several times in the dusk large lots of Pochard and Tufted came into a loch and then shifted on their own accord. Apart from Abberton Reservoir, Essex, I've never been in a district with large numbers of Goldeneye. At Abberton my experience was the same as yours; large counts in late afternoon with the birds concentrating in an area, although there was there a marked tendency at all times for Goldeneye not to scatter as much as they do in some places.' In a recent letter (1960), Campbell further comments 'I still have no solution re the 'disposal' of these late p.m. gatherings.

It would be advantageous to further the knowledge of communal behaviour by Goldeneye, and other species of 'diving-ducks,' of which little is as yet apparently known. Readers who have ready access to areas where Goldeneye regularly gather may, in consequence, be able to furnish observations of a more detailed nature.

Bernard King.

### Male Teal displaying to shore roosting females

WHILE on a visit to the Clevedon marshes, Somerset, on the 21st April, 1951, and in company with W. L. Roseveare, a party of at least 150 Teal *Anas crecca* were observed swimming on the outgoing tide, as well as a few roosting on a small and shallow bank which the tide had left uncovered.

As the light conditions were good it seemed worthwhile to make a sex count of these Teal, and for this I used a x 30 telescope. I soon discovered, however, that a small party of drakes appeared to be displaying amongst themselves. For instance, every time the tide drew the birds away from close by the shallow bank they immediately returned, either by swimming back quickly or by scurrying low level flights across the surface of the water—then the 'normal' displays began over again. But observations of a more prolonged nature revealed after all that the behaviour was directed towards twelve shore roosting birds, ten of which were female Teal—in fact the drakes ceased displaying as soon as the former birds finally departed to feed along the tidal edge.

Bernard King.

### Great Skua attacking ducks

ON 24th November, 1960 off Stert Point, Somerset, I witnessed a series of attacks by a Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* on a number of ducks, mainly Wigeon *Anas penelope* but also Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Teal *Anas crecca*.

It was high water at the time with a heavy and confused sea running. The Great Skua came into the area between Stert Point and Stert Island from seaward and landed on the water where it rested for 40 minutes.

There were several hundred duck present in the area mainly in small groups of up to 50 birds. I then noticed a group of 28 Wigeon on the water quite close to the Skua. Whilst I was watching, the Wigeon took wing, and the Skua immediately went after them with surprising acceleration and appeared to single out the last bird in the flight and relentlessly pursued it with great vigour. After a short chase the Wigeon, which I assume was becoming exhausted, took to the sea again.

At this point the Skua broke off the attack and climbed to about 100 ft., and at this height patrolled over the area very slowly, until another group of ducks took wing, whereupon the Skua would dive rapidly from the patrol position and pursue the group as before.

The 'patrolling' and 'attack' performance was repeated many times, and in all lasted 8 minutes.

The Skua then flew off and landed on Stert Island.

J. V. Morley,

Warden, Bridgwater Bay Nature Reserve.

### Feral North American Ruddy Ducks in Somerset

IN the autumn of 1957 a few (probably less than ten) full-winged young North American Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura j. jamaicensis*, which had been reared by their parents in the Rushy Pen at Slimbridge, flew away. One was discovered at Villice Bay, Chew Valley Reservoir, north Somerset, in November of the same year. During the subsequent winter the number present at Chew Valley increased to four and an equal number, presumed to be the same birds, were also observed over long periods on the nearby Blagdon Reservoir. In addition, single *jamaicensis* were occasionally reported to me from the reservoir at Barrow Gurney. It is reasonable to suppose that at least five Ruddy Ducks,