



MILEHAM

By Philip Wayre

Nearly 300 ducks have been ringed at Mileham in Norfolk during the four seasons 1951–55. Originally used for flighting duck, the pool is situated in the centre of a large arable field, and being some way from a road or any buildings, it is secluded. It is roughly half an acre in extent and oval in shape, the northern end is deep but the southern end, where the traps are situated, is shallow. This end dries out in summer and grass grows, which, when flooded in winter, attracts ducks. There is no cover round the pool, but during successive cleaning-out operations, the spoil has been left round the edges and now forms quite a high bank sheltering the water. No ducks have been shot here for the last eight or ten years.

The first trap was built in December 1951 and is 8 feet square and 6 feet high, and has three 'funnel entrances,' the whole thing being made of $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh wire netting over a frame of ash poles. A second trap was added later with two more funnel entrances, this trap being about 12 feet \times 5 feet \times 4 feet high. Water level round the traps varies according to the rainfall, but it is usually from 6 inches to 2 feet from November to April. No ducks have been caught when there has been less than 6 inches of water in the traps.

Feeding is carried out daily according to the number of ducks using the pool—about one and a half pails of barley being the average. This is scattered in the shallow water, and the funnels into the traps are liberally baited. Barley is always used for food. No decoys are used in the traps.

The traps are normally worked from about November to the end of March if water conditions allow, but most winters there are times when the whole pool is frozen hard and no ducks can be caught.

Normally very few ducks are caught during moonlight periods. The opposite is the rule if the water is frozen but the area in, and around, the trap kept free of ice. Under these conditions good catches have been made under the moon. Several catches of over 20 ducks have been made in one night and the record to date is 30 Mallard and one Teal. This was on a night of a full moon with the pit partly frozen over. The traps are tended in daylight.

Numbers of ducks using the pool are counted in at evening flight about every month, and vary from as low as 20 to a peak of well over 100. Largest numbers are usually reached in January. After ringing has been going on for a few weeks each season, the number of recaptures increases daily, until often the majority of ducks caught have already been ringed.

Ducks only use it as a feeding place by night, and it is at least four miles from any large water where they normally rest in the daytime.

Summary of Ducks caught from 1951-52 to 1954-55

Season	Species	Sex	Number Ringed	Recaptures	Number Caught
1951-52	Mallard	Male	5	0	16
	Mallard	Female	2	0	14
	Teal	Male	0	0	22
	Teal	Female	0	0	10
		Total ringed	7	Total caught	62
1952-53	Mallard	Male	50	36	86
	Mallard	Female	38	20	58
	Teal	Male	4	7	11
	Teal	Female	4	1	5
		Total ringed	96	Total caught	160
1953-54	Mallard	Male	59	94 (Both sexes)	153
	Mallard	Female	62	—	62
	Teal	Male	0	1	1
	Teal	Female	0	0	0
		Total ringed	121	Total caught	216
1954-55	Mallard	Male	24	15	39
	Mallard	Female	32	22	54
	Teal	Male	2	3	5
	Teal	Female	2	2	4
		Total ringed	60	Total caught	102

From the total of 284 ducks ringed there have been 45 recoveries to date, and of these 13 have been from abroad. Two Mallards ringed in February 1954 were shot within three days of each other in April the same year, one near Leningrad and the other on the Volga.

Of the total of 540 ducks caught in four seasons, 256 have been caught during dark periods and 284 during moonlight periods.

NOTE.—No ducks were caught at Mileham in 1955-56 because the pond was dry until January, and Mr Wayre was away after that.

ORIELTON, 1955-56

By R. M. Lockley

One thousand and six birds were caught at Orielton in the winter of 1955-56, of which 470 were retraps. Wildfowl newly-ringed were 536, made up of 434 Teal, 26 Mallard, 25 Wigeon, 19 Tufted Duck, 11 Coot, 10 Shoveler, 8 Moorhen, 1 each Pintail, Snipe and Manx Shearwater. This is a modest increase on