

General Field Notes

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POLICY STATEMENT ON EXOTIC WATERFOWL RECORDS

Reports of exotic waterfowl present a special problem. Waterfowl possess a great ability to traverse most geographic barriers, and wanderers do find their way far beyond their normal ranges. This is complicated, however, by the fact that exotic waterfowl are raised in this state by many aviculturalists, and escapes do occur. While most people pinion their birds to prevent flight, some do not; therefore, it is often impossible to determine whether a rare duck or goose is a wanderer from some far place or an escaped bird from some much closer collection of exotic waterfowl. Plumage and health conditions, while sometimes proving a bird to be an escape, can never prove one to be wild.

It is the practice of this editor to accept well documented records, such as the one below, but only after some delay to allow an effort to be made to determine whether or not the bird was an escape. It often takes some time for such information to surface. The publication of such a record does not mean that the bird has been accepted as a documented state record. It does make the information available to all. At times the publication of such a record in *Chat* may bring forth information that will help to determine the origin of the bird. In other cases subsequent observations may help to establish a trend that lends strength to the original record.

Such conditional acceptance in no way reflects unfavorably upon an individual who has made an observation and who has presented all of the facts at his disposal.—DEPT. ED.

Mandarin Duck in Eastern North Carolina

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On 25 May 1972, I was shown a drake Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*) shot that day by James Boyd and B.H. Oates Jr. of New Bern, N.C. The identification of this species is so obvious that there is no need to belabor its description. I am not aware of a previous North Carolina record for this species. This individual was taken on a small woods pond off the Trent River in Craven County, N.C.

One consideration might be that this duck had escaped from some collection of pen-raised ducks. I do not believe this to be the case. The bird was reported to have flown

strongly. It was in its natural habitat, a wooded pond, and was associated with its North American relative, the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). I carefully examined the specimen and found its plumage to be full, brilliant, and immaculate—in contrast to the usually dull and frayed appearance of pen-raised birds.

The Mandarin Duck has been naturalized in Western Europe for a number of years (*A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, Peterson et. al., 1966). It is my suggestion that this individual, like the Eurasian Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*) and European Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) strayed from there. The skin is now preserved as a mounted specimen in the collection of Ralph Morris.

[See "Policy Statement on Exotic Waterfowl Records" published elsewhere in this issue of *Chat*.—DEPT. ED.]

Golden Eagle in Eastern North Carolina

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At 14:00 on 23 October 1973, we observed a mature Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) at the Upper Coastal Plains Research Station about 10 miles SE of Tarboro, N.C. When first seen the eagle was flapping and gliding over a cleared area on the edge of the station property. A Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) was circling nearby, and the contrast in wingspan, angle of wings, and mode of flapping allowed us to identify the bird as a eagle immediately.

As the eagle sailed overhead at about 100 feet altitude, we noted that it was deep brown in color with the base of the tail feathers white. The wings were proportionally broader in relation to their length than in the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The secondaries shortened abruptly next to the body. All of the above features are helpful in separating the Golden Eagle from the Bald Eagle.

After gaining an altitude of about 300 feet the eagle glided about 2 miles on set wings to the vicinity of a small swamp south of the station. We followed the bird and again observed it from about 100 feet as it glided over a small pasture. William Brown at this time noted small white wing patches as the bird wheeled to fly over the swamp. In the Golden Eagle, white shoulder patches occur in birds from Scotland and eastern Canada (Amadon and Brown, *Hawks, Eagles and Vultures of the World*). We concluded that the bird was a mature Golden Eagle, and probably a female as we estimated the wingspread at over 7 feet.

Red Phalarope in Wake County, N.C.

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On 27 October 1973 Robert J. Hader spotted a phalarope while scanning Lake Benson for waterfowl; however, he was unable to see it well enough for satisfactory specific identification. On the following day Chris Marsh and David Whitehurst found the bird, and Marsh was able to wade to within 30 feet of where it was feeding on an island mud-flat. From the black eye patch, uniform gray back, white forehead, wing pattern, and thick bill, it was identified as a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*). The solid black bill was