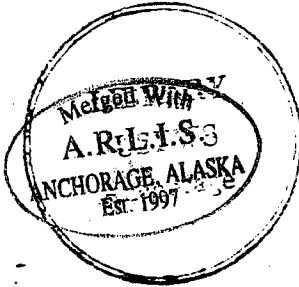


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# LAKE LOUISE WATERFOWL BANDING REPORT, ALASKA

1954

James D. Petersen  
Ass't. Refuge Manager

~~7-13-54~~  
FWLB  
0434

## ITINERARY:

The Lake Louise Waterfowl Banding crew, consisting of Richard Ganschow and myself, departed Anchorage on July 7 in the new International Carryall, and arrived at the Gulkana base camp at 10 A. M. the following morning. Following a discussion of the project with Gordon Watson, the 12-foot aluminum boat and a supply of white gas for the outboard motors were loaded on the Ford Pickup, and we left for the Tangle Lakes area to begin the banding season.

From July 9 through 21 we found duck banding poor, with only 10 birds banded. After the first three days on Tangle Lakes, it was apparent that we were too early for banding most of the young birds, and the adult moult had not advanced to the point where they were flightless, at least in that particular area. Three days were devoted to gathering information on production study in the Tangle Lakes area and along the Richardson Highway from Paxson to Gulkana before flying in to Fish Lake the evening of July 17 in Service aircraft N-708. There we were confronted with the same frustrating situation, in which the limited number of young birds seen were either too small to band or we could not capture them for various reasons.

A flock of an estimated 300 scaup, scoter, bufflehead and others occupied the lake, but not a single one was flightless. The first indication that some birds were moulting was seen on July 18 when an adult was flushed from the grass, and in attempting to take off the water, lost a large number of flight feathers, and immediately returned to the water.

Our next move took us to Old Man Lake in N-708 on July 21, and Bob Hinman joined us to assist in the banding. With a larger number of broods to work on, and the presence of a few flightless adults, we were encouraged about our chances of success. After five days we had managed to band 51 birds. Two days of clear, calm weather aided us tremendously as we could spot the ducklings on the water much more readily, and maneuverability of the rubber boat was increased with the lack of wind and choppy water.

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NATURAL RESOURCES  
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An accident with aircraft N-708 at the Gulkana airfield necessitated our being moved from Old Man Lake to Gulkana on July 27 while FWS Goose N-741 was in the area.

Working from the base camp at Gulkana, lakes accessible from the highway were checked and a few ducks banded, but this did not prove too successful, as no large concentrations of birds were found. On August 1 we left Gulkana and drove to Tangle Lakes to give that area another try. Many of the young birds were now large enough to band and we were able to pick up quite a few during the next four and a half days. It was here that we discovered young Scaup could be captured almost as readily as most of the pond ducks we had had contact with, despite information to the contrary. So from this time on, all Scaup broods got the same treatment as any of the other ducks.

Bob Hinman received word on August 3 that the draft board in Anchorage had made an appointment for him with the U. S. Army on August 10, so he left our crew to clear up some business. On August 4 Bob Bell and Monte Grigsby, who had been working on River Basins salmon survey, arrived to assist in the work for a few days.

We left Tangle Lakes on August 6 and spent the remainder of the time on this project, covering lakes along the highway, and picking up Scaup that we had passed by previously. Mr. Elkins, Wildlife Management Supervisor, accompanied Ganschow and myself on a flight to Old Man Lake and a day's banding there on August 12, but due to extreme high winds, we met with only fair success.

The operation was completed on August 14 and we returned to Anchorage.

#### AREA COVERED:

The Lake Louise area consisted of the relatively level, lake country, bounded by the Talkeetna Mountains on the west, the Alaska Range to the north, and the Wrangell Mountains on the east. Based on the coverage this past summer, the Tangle Lakes could be considered a separate area, as it is more or less isolated from the country to the south by a small range of mountains running east and west. These lakes are somewhat easier to work as they are generally deeper and the shoreline reached much more readily, due to lack of mud and weeds. However, the methods used to capture the ducks were much the same as those used on the other lakes. The remainder of the area covered by this crew would be more closely defined as being north of the Little Nelchina River and the Glenn Highway, west of the Richardson Highway from the junction of the Glenn Highway north to Paxson Lodge, and south of the west fork of the Gulkana River.

Some outlying ponds or lakes had good populations of young birds and those worked, such as Kenney Lake and a small pond along the Chitina Road, produced a fair number of banded ducks. Lakes east of the Richardson Highway, on either side of the Gakona River, were other possibilities, although they were not reached during the banding operation.

Most of the lakes in the lower country are quite shallow, and with the deep mud on the bottom, plus a heavy growth of weeds near the shoreline, operating a boat and motor or trying to chase down a bird on foot was often very frustrating. Ground cover on the shore, consisting of heavy growth of brush and grass plus numerous holes for the ducklings to crawl into, added to the difficulties.

Water conditions for previous years are not known. Heavy rains prior to our last trip into the Tangle Lakes on August 1 caused a rise of nearly 18" in the entire system from the level on July 15. Several days of clear, hot weather brought about a noticeable drop from this high level by our departure time on August 6. Other lakes or areas visited two or more times showed a considerable drop in water levels later in the season as compared to conditions observed the first trip. This apparently was a near-normal situation, but our opinion was that it may have been a wetter summer than usual, causing water levels to be higher than previous years. However, this is not based on a study of past weather records, and may be entirely incorrect.

#### METHODS AND EQUIPMENT USED:

Travel while working lakes accessible from the highway was accomplished very well with the new International Travelall equipped with a car-top carrier for transporting the 12-foot aluminum boat. Sufficient gas and oil for the motors and grub and camping equipment for two or three men for several days was handled easily.

The 12-foot aluminum boat with a 10 hp. Scott-Attwater outboard motor was well suited for operating on the larger lakes that could be reached from the highways or access roads. It handled three men and a small amount of gear satisfactorily. But at the time when four men were working on Tangle Lakes, performance was cut considerably due to the heavier load and more crowded conditions in the boat. Economically and mechanically the new 10 hp. Scott-Attwater motor proved to be the best piece of equipment we had. The five-gallon "Stow-away" tank was never run dry during a day's operation - usually half a tank would be sufficient. Nearly six hours' running on Lake Louise, about

half of that time at full speed, did not take over 3/4 of a tank. No mechanical failure of any kind was experienced, but several more hours running would have been a better test of performance along this line.

On the small lakes, and when equipment was moved by airplane, a rubber boat and 3 hp. Evinrude outboard were used. This was a good combination and served well, even with three men working from it, though that was somewhat cramped quarters. The 3 hp. Evinrude worked better than expected in the weeds and mud, and never had a mechanical failure. It consumed more gas than the 10 horse for the same amount of operation, however.

Capturing the young ducks was accomplished by several methods, the most successful though time consuming, being to maneuver a brood into open water, then concentrate on one bird and keep after it until it tired from diving and was picked up with a dip net. Under ideal conditions where the wind was calm, the water clear of weeds and fairly deep and a large enough area to operate the boat freely, quite a few ducklings were taken in this manner.

If the conditions along the lake shore were such that the boat and crew could get ashore in a hurry immediately following a brood of ducks, many times one or more were found; otherwise; they would be too well hidden or far into the brush and escape. This method was varied somewhat by placing a man on the beach and an attempt made to drive the birds to shore near his hiding place with the boat, and he was able to capture one or two as they came out of the water and ran for cover. In the case of Scaup, many were followed as they dove and gradually worked to shore where they would hide near the water's edge, then be picked up by hand or with the dip nets as they tried to swim away.

Sometimes birds were located by thoroughly searching in the brush and grass or listening for them as they crawled away. Ganschow earned the title of "Bird dog" for his efforts along this line. Here the dip nets were useless as they tangled in brush and hampered more than helped in capturing the ducklings. In the water, however, they were an invaluable asset.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS:

For work along the highway, travel with a suburban-type truck carrying a boat on top or by trailer is a very satisfactory arrangement. Operation requiring movement by air could be carried out in one or two ways. If one of the crew members were a pilot, use of a light plane on floats would probably be very effective, particularly when work on some of the smaller lakes would not require more than two or

three days. Moves could be planned to be short hops and while several trips might be necessary, this could be accomplished in one day. Availability of a Widgeon such as was used this past season would probably work out the best, as moves can be made in one trip, thus saving considerable time. Should it be determined that a light plane be used for the banding operation, the aircraft should stay with the crew most of the time unless needed by some other project leader in the area. In the event that other field crews are working nearby, programming of needs and scheduling of moves might be worked out, and from this determine what type of plane would best suit the requirements of all concerned.

Considering all aspects of the operation, the boats and motors used last season were probably as suitable as can be found. The rubber boat and 3 hp. motor are light and compact enough for air transportation, and the aluminum boat and 10 hp. outboard were handled without difficulty. If a similar type aluminum boat could be obtained that was lighter in weight and yet nearly as sturdy in construction, this would facilitate the handling by two men somewhat. It would not be wise, however, to sacrifice the advantages of a well-built boat for a few pounds of weight. In addition to the equipment that might well prove helpful would be a collapsible canoe, one of the "Linkanoe" type, that could be moved by plane. This type of craft operating in areas of heavy weeds and shallow water would get crew members on the beach much faster than either of the other two boats. Thus, two men experienced in handling a canoe could be very effective.

With the methods used this year in capturing ducks, the dip nets were all that were needed. Some thought had been given to the possible use of a box trap with leads set out on either side, and the ducks herded into it. If traps of this sort are successful in other areas, it might be well to consider one for use here, although ideal situations for making such a system work are not too numerous. Something constructed of light weight materials and easy to set up would work to the best advantage.

Bob Hinman reported the use of a dog on Minto Lakes as very successful. A good retriever would no doubt find many ducks that ordinarily escaped capture by man, particularly in the heavy underbrush and grass. It raises the problem of obtaining a well-trained dog and keeping the animal through the winter, unless one can be acquired for part-time use during the summer. The practical aspects of such a plan should be discussed further before any definite recommendations could be made.

Number of men for future banding crews would depend upon the equipment available and the desired results from a summer's operation. With the use of a light float plane for moving from lake to lake, and working from the rubber boat, a two-man crew would be most practical. The added load and time required in transporting men and equipment, besides crowding conditions in the rubber boat, when a third man is in the party, might outweigh the advantages of an additional helper. Two men can operate efficiently, particularly when using the methods found most successful this year, and get quite a few birds banded. If air transportation is by a Widgeon or Goose, a three-man crew can be handled without difficulty, plus another rubber boat or canoe as described previously. Three men would be able to work with two boats and also probably handle a trap of the type mentioned earlier. Thus a more effective banding program would undoubtedly be completed with the larger crew and additional equipment.

Since this was the first year of banding in the Lake Louise area, all concerned were experimenting with methods, lakes to operate on and many other problems to make the project a success. Judging from the observations this past season, a banding crew would not have to be on the job much before July 20. Although birds can be picked up earlier, the time spent locating and capturing ducklings large enough to hold a band might be far in excess of the value of results obtained. Some time can and should be spent, prior to beginning of banding, on reconnaissance of the area to locate the lakes with good populations of birds, paying particular attention to concentrations of Pond Ducks and Scaup. Production Study information could be obtained prior to the beginning of banding work, as well as notes kept during the remainder of the season. The majority of the Baldpate and Scaup are not large enough to band until late July or the first of August, but the Mallard, Pintail and Teal were bandable after the first week of July. The latter were in the minority, however, thus making the work difficult and results poor until two weeks after the crew had been working the area.

Tables accompanying this report summarize the information gathered on broods and the results of the banding accomplished. Incidental to the primary responsibility of getting good coverage with the banding, brood sizes by species were recorded as observed at the various locations. This is not a complete record of all broods seen as at times the crew was occupied with other details, and there is also a possibility of some repetition since several trips were made over the same areas, and movements of the birds from one part of a lake to another might not have been noticed. It is a representative picture of the production in the area and may be of some value. Birds banded were tabled by species and by location to show what ducks were picked up and the number of each species at the different localities worked.

The work of Dick Ganschow and Bob Hinman was well done and their interest especially appreciated. Acknowledgment also should be made to Gordon Watson for the assistance given in locating lakes with good populations of birds and also in seeing that an aircraft was made available for moving camp when needed.

TABLE I -- BROOD OBSERVATIONS -- LAKE LOUISE -- 1954

SPECIES AND LOCATION	DATE	BROOD SIZE BY AGE CLASS			NO. OF BROODS
		I	II	III	
<u>BALDPATE:</u>					
Mile 147					
Richardson Highway	7/14		8		1
Mile 151					
Richardson Highway	7/16		8		1
Tangle Lakes	7/15		5,3,8,6,6,7		6
Mile 145					
Richardson Highway	7/16		2		1
Chitina Road	7/17		4,6,8		3
Fish Lake	7/18, 19		8,9,5,6,5,2		6
Old Man Lake	7/23, 24		6,7,7,3,5,2,4,8,6,5,5,6		12
Lake Louise	7/28		6		1
Kenney Lake	7/31		5		1
Tangle Lakes	8/2-5		5,6,3,2,2,5		6
Tulsona Lake	8/9			6	1
Old Man Lake	8/12		6,4	6	3
<u>SCAUP SP.:</u>					
Mile 149					
Richardson Highway	7/14		9		1
Tangle Lakes	7/15	8,10, 8,11			4
Mile 174					
Richardson Highway	7/16		5		1
Mile 172					
Richardson Highway	7/16		6		1
Mile 146					
Richardson Highway	7/16		8,5		2
Mile 139					
Richardson Highway	7/16		5		1
Chitina Road	7/17		8,6,7,9,8,4		6
Fish Lake	7/18		8		1
Old Man Lake	7/23		6,7,7		3
Lake Louise	7/28		9		1
Tolsona Lake	7/29		7,4,7,8,9,7,4,5		8

TABLE I -- (contd.)

SPECIES AND LOCATION	DATE	BROOD SIZE BY AGE CLASS			NO. OF BROODS
		I	II	III	
Tangle Lakes	8/2-6		10,7,7,7,8,6,7,8		8
Meier Lake	8/6		6		1
Mile 11					
Slana-Tok Highway	8/10		7		1
<u>PINTAIL:</u>					
Tangle Lakes	7/9		6		1
Meier Lake	7/14		5,4,3,6		4
Tangle Lakes	7/16		5		1
Paxson Lake	7/16		5		1
Fish Lake	7/18,19		4,4,7		3
Old Man Lake	7/23		3,3		2
Lake Louise	7/28		2		1
Kenney Lake	7/31		5		1
Tangle Lakes	8/3-5		7/3	6	3
Mile 9					
Slana-Tok Highway	8/10			2	1
Old Man Lake	8/12			5,6	2
<u>GR. W. TEAL:</u>					
Tangle Lakes	7/15		6		1
Chitina Road	7/17		4		1
Old Man Lake	7/23		5,5,6,5		4
Lake Louise	7/28		2		1
Tolsona Lake	7/29		4,3		2
Chitina Road	7/29			4	1
Kenney Lake	7/31		4		1
Tangle Lakes	8/2-4		2,4	4	3
Meier Lake	8/6		4		1
Kenney Lake	8/7			4	1
<u>MALLARD:</u>					
Tangle Lakes	7/15	3			1
Chitina Road	7/17		5		1
Fish Lake	7/18		2		1
Old Man Lake	7/23		5,5		2
Kenney Lake	7/31		3		1
<u>GOLDENEYE:</u>					
Fish Lake	7/19		5		1
Old Man Lake	7/23		5,3,4		3
Tolsona Lake	7/29		3		1
Mile 9					
Slana-Tok Highway	8/10		4		1



TABLE I -- (contd.)

SPECIES AND LOCATION	DATE	BROOD SIZE BY AGE CLASS			NO. OF BROODS
		I	II	III	
Mile 11 Slana-Tok	8/10			6	1
<u>BUFFLEHEAD:</u>					
Chitina Road	7/17		5,5		2
Chitina Road	8/10			5	1
<u>OLD SQUAW:</u>					
Tangle Lakes	7/15		6,7,6		3
Mile 172 Richardson Highway	7/16		3,3		2
<u>RED BREASTED MERGANSER:</u>					
Tangle Lakes	7/15		7		1
Fish Lake	7/18		7		1
Lake Louise	7/28		2,12,10		3
<u>WHITE W. SCOTER:</u>					
Old Man Lake	7/23		4		1
Kenney Lake	7/31		11		1

COMBINED BROODS OBSERVEDBALDPATE:

Old Man Lakes 17

SCAUP:

Tolsona Lake 7/29 16  
 Kenney Lake 8/7 48  
 Chitina Road 8/8 34  
 Tolsona Lake 8/9 29,17

RED BR. MERGANSER:

Lake Louise 7/28 18

WHITE W. SCOTER:

Tolsona Lake 7/29 20,22

TABLE II -- BIRDS BANDED - BY SPECIES

SPECIES	ADULT		JUVENILE		Unknown	TOTAL
	M	F	M	F		
COMMON MALLARD	1		1	4		6
BALDPATE	5	1	35	21		62
G. W. TEAL		1	7	11	1	20
AMERICAN PINTAIL			6	15	3	24
GREATER SCAUP	1		4	6		11
SCAUP SP.			27	31		58
TOTALS	7	2	80	88	4	181

TABLE III -- BIRDS BANDED - BY LOCATION

LOCATION	BALDPATE		SCAUP		PINTAIL		GR W TEAL		MALLARD		TOTAL
	JUV	AD	JUV	AD	JUV	AD	JUV	AD	JUV	AD	
TANGLE LAKES	16		28	1	11		6	1			63
FISH LAKE					5				1		6
OLD MAN LAKE	35	5	1		5		9		2	1	58
KENNEY LAKE	3	1	19		1		4		2		30
Mile 2 CHITINA ROAD	1		11								12
TOLSONA LAKE	1		9								10
Mile 9 SLANA-TOK HIGHWAY					1						1
LAKE LOUISE					1						1
TOTALS	56	6	68	1	24		19	1	5	1	181