



Alaska Waterfowl Production - 1964.
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As predicted at the time of the waterfowl breeding population survey, the production of all species is down from 1963. All the dabblers and canvasbacks--the early nesters--were particularly hard-hit.

The overall trend on the two major study areas of the interior was almost identical. At Tetlin 61 percent fewer broods were counted than in 1963. On the Yukon Flats 58 percent fewer broods were counted. Canvasback were down 86 and 79 percent respectively. Pintail were down 64 and 66 percent. Widgeon were down 74 and 53 percent. Mallards were down 91 percent at Tetlin but only 8 percent on the Yukon Flats. Conversely, green-winged teal were down only 30 percent at Tetlin but 68 percent on the Yukon Flats. When the first brood count terminated on July 24 it was still too early for an accurate assessment of the scaup trend. The first broods were just starting to appear. The scaup production will undoubtedly be less than last year, but as habitually late nesters, they appear to be less adversely affected than the other species.

As was to be expected, the hatch for all species in all areas of Alaska has been much later than normal. For instance, in 1963 at Tetlin 44 percent of all broods counted were age class 1, 35 percent age class 2 and 21 percent age class 3. On the same dates in 1964, 78 percent were age class 1, 22 percent age class 2 and no broods of age class 3 were observed. The comparison on the Yukon Flats was very similar.

In contrast to the late hatch and few broods, however, the average brood size was unaccountably and exceptionally large. In 1963 at Tetlin 126 broods averaged 7.3 and in 1964, 49 broods averaged 7.1. On the Yukon Flats in 1963, 160 broods averaged 6.9 and in 1964, 76 broods averaged 6.8. The brood size of all species remained high.

Comparable brood studies were not conducted on the coastal tundra of western Alaska, but casual observations made during studies on the brant and goose nesting grounds indicate a production trend similar to the interior. Of approximately 50 whistling swan nests observed each of the last two years, the average clutch size was down from 4.24 eggs in 1963 to 3.28 eggs in 1964. Brant production will be far better than in 1963 when it was practically nil. Much of the optimum nesting area was flooded from run-off water until mid-June but there is still a possibility that production will be 50-75 percent of optimum. The calculated 90 percent loss of brant production in 1963 was verified in July of this year when a sample of 2,064 flightless birds were trapped during the moult. Of this random sample only 3.6 percent were yearlings. By way of contrast, 40 percent of a comparable sample were yearlings following the last optimum hatch.

Independent studies by Peter Shepherd of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on the Minto Flats of interior Alaska and on the Copper Delta show production figures for ducks, Canada geese and trumpeter swan very comparable to the data outlined above.

COMPARATIVE BROOD COUNTS FROM TWO STUDY AREAS IN ALASKA

Species	TETLIN				YUKON FLATS			
	No. Broods Counted			Trend 1964 vs 1963	No. Broods Counted			Trend 1964 vs 1963
	1962	1963	1964		1962	1963	1964	
Pintail	13	11	4	-68.6%	27	50	17	-66.0%
Mallard	14	23	2	-91.3	15	12	11	- 8.3
Widgeon	13	23	6	-73.9	111	85	40	-52.9
Shoveler	1				21	17	7	-58.8
B.W. teal		1						
G.W. teal	30	27	19	-29.6	32	37	12	-67.6
Scaup*	2	11	2		9	43	16	
Canvasback	13	14	2	-85.7	22	19	4	-78.9
Goldeneye	4	2	2		1	1	2	
Bufflehead	14	8	4	-50.0	3	4	4	no change
Scoter*	2	3			3	5	1	
Unidentified	14	3	8		3			
Total	135	126	49	-61.1	247	273	114	-58.2

* Too early for significant number of these species to have hatched at time of census.

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