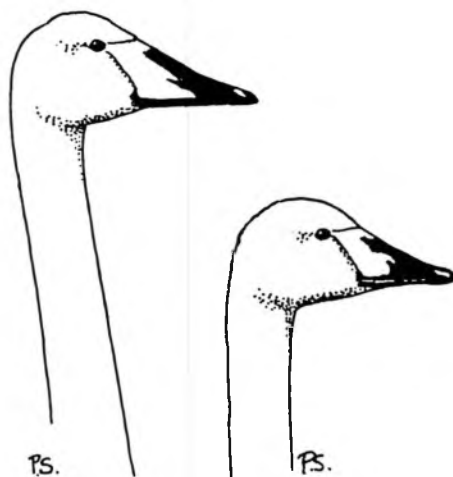


Wildfowl 39

EDITED BY G.V.T. MATTHEWS

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Editorial

Last year we were celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Wildfowl Trust, and tracing the evolution of its annual publication, WILDFOWL. The present volume is the last I shall edit, having taken on the task in 1968. So perhaps a rather more personal editorial is acceptable. Certainly, seeing 21 volumes to the presses has been quite a labour. It is not one with which I would have persisted had I not had the support of Malcolm Ogilvie, for 19 of the volumes. I have no great urge to carry this burden with me into retirement and am therefore delighted that Dr Janet Kear will take over with WILDFOWL 40. She has just completed an eight year stint of editing the prestigious IBIS and won universal approval for the competent way in which she has improved an already excellent quarterly. Handling WILDFOWL should seem but a light task to her.

The hallmark of WILDFOWL throughout its history has been the cover painting by Sir Peter Scott. These formed a wonderful gallery of wildfowl images; happily they are being made available again in the form of Wildfowl Trust calendars. Last year his painting was of the Greenland White-fronted Goose, which he first described for science. This year he depicts a duck he has never seen, the Brazilian Merganser. Indeed this is the only extant species of the world's ducks, swans, geese, flamingos and screamers that he has not observed alive. He even knew the now extinct Pink-headed Duck, overleaf.

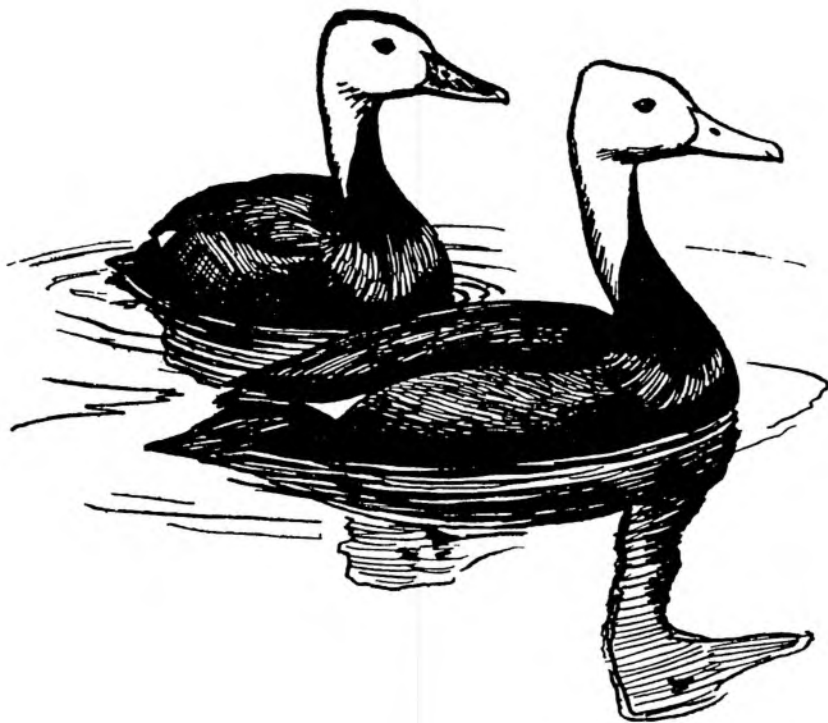
Two species are particularly associated with Slimbridge, the Lesser White-fronted Goose and the Hawaiian Goose. Sir Peter's drawings of these birds formed, respectively, the frontispiece and back cover of the first volume I edited, WILDFOWL 19. Permitting myself a little nostalgia I have reprinted these in my last issue.

The fully automated production of this volume relies heavily on the meticulous work of the computer-operators at Slimbridge, especially Joyce Portlock. It is also a pleasure to thank the 34 referees who went to much trouble to ensure that this volume is scientifically fully respectable.

The geographical coverage of the papers is, as usual, worldwide. Besides the one from Brazil, there are others from Chile (2) and Peru; from Canada (3) and USA (2); from Australia; from Finland, Sweden and Norway (2); from Belgium (2), Ireland and Britain (4). The subjects range through breeding biology, feeding, disturbance, weight change, territoriality, nest structure, hunting, migration and distribution to plumage and bill patterns. The papers examine swans, geese, sheldgeese, steamer ducks, dabbling ducks, mergansers, stiffetails, coots and the generality of ducks. There should be something for everyone, the healthy mix that has been the aim throughout my tenure.

What we publish depends, subject to peer-review and editorial decision, on what is submitted. And that reflects the reputation of our journal. The editor must seek to maintain a high standard of clarity and style. Seldom do scientists produce lucid prose. Some papers are dull, however much one polishes. Others have an interesting message, but wrapped in verbiage. Once in a while there arrives a gem, elegantly phrased, logically arranged, beautifully illustrated. Such papers revive an editor's flagging enthusiasm.

I wish WILDFOWL well under the new management; I send good wishes to The Wildfowl Trust itself and to the organisation which lives in symbiosis with it, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB). Together they will surely strengthen Slimbridge's claim to be a world centre for the conservation of wetlands.



Pink-headed Duck