

### Brood-sizes of Ducks in North Iceland, July, 1961

THE Ulster North Iceland Expedition of 1961, whose primary object was the investigation of Harlequin Ducks (see p.000), collected a number of records of brood-sizes of ten species of ducks. Since data of this kind are surprisingly scarce on this side of the Atlantic they seem worth recording. We were camped on an island in the River Laxá, a mile and a half below Myvatn, from 7th to 15th July and were on the shores of the lake itself from 15th to 22nd.

		Brood-sizes										over	total broods	average brood size
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10		
Wigeon	L.					1							1	5
Mallard	L.		1	1	4	1	2	1	3					
	M.		1			1	2						16	5.1
Tufted Duck	L.	1	1		2	1	1	1		1	1			
	M.	1	3			2		2	2	1			20	5.2
Scaup	L.		3	1	3	3	2	1	2			one	13	
	M.		1			1		1			1		20	5.4
Common Scoter	L.			1		1	1						3	4.7
Harlequin Duck	L.					1		1					2	6
Long-tailed Duck	L.	2	2											
	M.			1								one	12	5
Barrow's Goldeneye	L.	1	1		3	4		2	1			two	11	16
												one	14	6.6
												one	22	
Goosander	L.					1			1	1	1	4	8.0	

L=seen on River Laxá; M=on Mývatn.

All the ducklings seen were very young, probably under a week old, except for the three Mallard broods on Mývatn, which were well grown.

Collecting of duck's eggs by local farmers is permitted in the Mývatn area, with the proviso that at least four eggs must be left in each nest. There is however no definite indication from these observations that the broods seen had been artificially reduced by egg-taking, except perhaps in the case of the Long-tailed Duck.

Red-breasted Merganser. We saw 24 groups of ducklings on Mývatn, in numbers varying from 1 to 52, averaging 11.2. The clutch-size does not normally exceed 12: if five groups larger than 12 are omitted, the average brood size is reduced to 118/19, or 6.2. This is likely to be an over-correction, since some of the smaller broods may have lost some of their number to crèches, rather than by death. On 16th July, near Reykjald at the north-east corner of Mývatn, we counted 14 females with broods. Three days later these had resolved themselves into two ducks with broods of 33 and 52, and the majority of the original mothers had disappeared. When any other duck ventured too near either of these "nursery schools," the warden chased it away. This system was not (yet) in vogue in another bay a mile and a half south where eight "normal" broods were counted, each with a duck in attendance.

The mortality of merganser ducklings was evidently very high. We counted 27 dead, all just a few days old. Most of those we examined had many leeches, about half-an-inch long, in their nasal passages and some also among the body down. Several infested like this died in our hands.

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