

## WILD DUCKS

IN the season 1952-53 the number of ducks caught for ringing in Berkeley New Decoy at Slimbridge was 1148; at Borough Fen Decoy, Peakirk, Northamptonshire, where ringing is undertaken for the Trust by Mr Billy Williams, who operates the decoy, the total was disappointing—only 64. Ducks ringed have been made available to the Duck Adoption Scheme of the Wildfowl Inquiry Committee. The rings, issued by the British Trust for Ornithology, bear the address of the British Museum (Natural History), London.

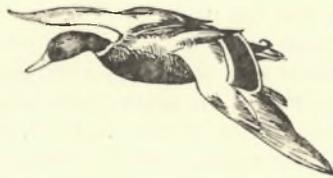
### BERKELEY NEW DECOY

After the disappointing autumn of 1951 it was reassuring to find that the numbers of Mallards frequenting the decoy in August, September and October 1952 had returned to the level of 1950, with the result that the total catch for the season (Table V) was the second highest since the decoy was repaired in 1946, and only 55 short of the record catch of two years before—1203. Mallards comprised 83% of the catch, a proportion so large as to obscure the variations in the numbers of other species caught. For Teal this was the best season since the formation of the Trust, but the catch of Wigeon was very small, as in the previous two years. The numbers of Wigeon living on the estuary and feeding on the Dumbles or in the fields near the decoy continue to be large in the mid-winter months, so that the failure to catch them must be attributed to the comparative unattractiveness of the decoy pool to this species. A similar explanation may account for the modest total of Pintails caught, but in this case the Trust enclosures provide the counter-attraction, the ducks becoming so tame that they scorn the seclusion of the decoy. The numbers of Shovelers frequenting the pool vary little from year to year. They are more numerous than the catch suggests but are little interested in the bait provided in the pipes and not very keen on dogs either.

The catch of 155 (152 Mallard, 3 Teal) on 22 September was the largest day-total yet achieved. This included 92 at one run at the west pipe (the best of the season, although well short of the record 145 of 13 September 1950), and 63 run simultaneously at the south. Other large day-totals were 76, 68, 60 and 57, all in September.

TABLE V  
CATCH AND RINGING FIGURES IN BERKELEY NEW DECOY

		1946- 47	1947- 48	1948- 49	1949- 50	1950- 51	1951- 52	1952- 53	Total
Mallard	Ringed	3	64	102	410	802	108	730	2219
	Recaptures	—	6	19	71	222	35	223	576
	Total Catch	3	70	121	481	1024	143	954	2796
Teal	Ringed	2	24	24	56	98	77	106	387
	Recaptures	—	—	7	2	12	10	42	73
	Total Catch	2	25	31	58	110	87	148	461
Wigeon	Ringed	—	19	52	19	4	—	6	100
	Recaptures	—	—	20	2	2	—	—	24
	Total Catch	—	21	72	21	6	—	6	126
Pintail	Ringed	—	2	13	17	36	22	12	102
	Recaptures	—	1	4	5	7	9	5	31
	Total Catch	—	3	17	22	43	31	17	133
Shoveler	Ringed	—	9	26	23	18	7	17	100
	Recaptures	—	—	—	3	2	2	3	10
	Total Catch	—	9	26	26	20	9	20	110
Garganey	Ringed	1	2	1	1	—	—	1	6
	Recaptures	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Total Catch	1	5	2	1	—	—	1	10
Gadwall	Ringed	—	—	—	—	—	7	2	9
	Recaptures	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Total Catch	—	—	—	—	—	7	2	9
Total	Ringed	6	120	218	526	958	221	874	2923
	Recaptures	—	7	50	83	245	56	273	714
	Total Catch	6	133	269	609	1203	277	1148	3645



### BOROUGH FEN DECOY

Since 1951 the ringing of ducks at this decoy has been financed by the Trust. Lack of funds has meant that it has only been possible to make other species than Mallards available for ringing—as each bird must be paid for at its market price. 1952–53 proved to be a very poor season for other species of ducks and Mr Williams was hampered by ill-health, with the result that sixty-four Teal were the only ducks ringed, compared with over nine hundred in the previous season.