



SCAUP DUCKS

TO RECOGNIZE A DUCK WHEN WE SEE ONE.

It is common to hear a person tell of seeing a "duck or some such bird swimming!" Even the more advanced student is likely to receive a vague impression from the first sight of a swimming bird, whether duck, coot, loon or grebe; although an ornithologist would scarcely use the term "such bird", knowing them to be not intimately related. The uncertainty is due to a wariness which these birds have in common; they are usually seen at such a distance that their forms are indistinct, and their color obscure.

We cannot here describe the specific differences and characters of the sixty or more American birds included in the groups under consideration. We should first learn to distinguish the main groups. Naturally the question "Is it a duck?" goes before, "What kind of duck?"

The accompanying illustrations should be sufficient to indicate plainly the resemblances and the differences of form and color, which we wish to notice. Size may at times give a clue. The differences in size between grebes, ducks and coots, are not marked when the birds are alone, as is usually the case, so that direct comparison is impossible. The smaller ducks, such as teal have practically the same size as piedbilled grebes. Form is a surer guide. One can usually approach any of these birds closely enough to recognize them by their outlines. When in doubt approach the bird till it flies or dives; its actions should furnish the necessary clue. If it persist in diving refusing to fly, the chances are that it is a grebe or a loon; size should tell you which. These birds have developed their diving and swimming powers at the expense of their wings; they are as ready to dive and swim as they are reluctant to fly. When they do rise

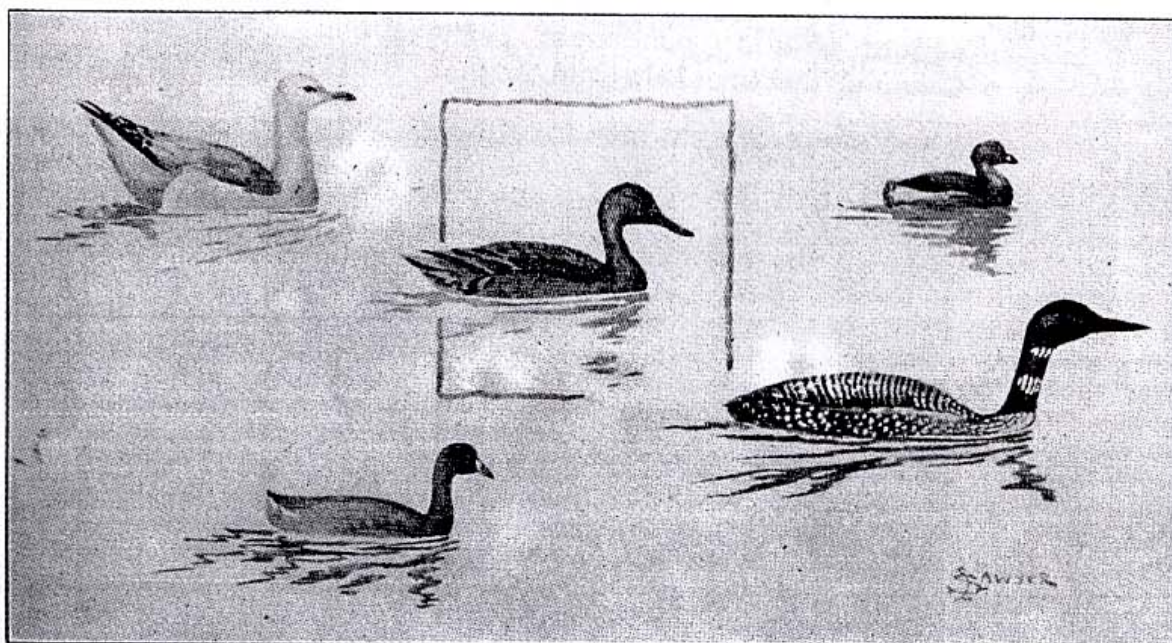
from the water it is with great effort; but once fairly launched in the air, the flight is not unlike that of ducks, for which birds they might be mistaken if at a distance. Loons are oftener seen in flight than grebes; the latter scarcely ever fly more than a few hundred feet at most, and seem to have difficulty in keeping clear of the surface.

The numbers in which they are seen at a given time and place may in a loose way be diagnostic of the groups. Several grebes or loons may be found more or less closely associated, yet they do not congregate in flocks. Ducks, geese, and coots are gregarious. The sight of a flock of sizable, swimming birds, therefore, somewhat restricts the question of identification. We are little concerned with geese, because their relatively great size distinguishes them from all but loons; from loons they may be distinguished by the fact they do not dive, and usually are found in flocks.

It remains to consider color and marking. These so far as they enter into our problem, as limited in this article, may usually be regarded as of secondary importance. Bright colors are confined almost exclusively to the ducks—more precisely, to the drakes; this is largely true of distinct markings of any kind, or such as are likely to be observable in the wild bird; the loon, however, is distinctly black and white; yet, because the pattern has a rather finely checkered effect, the fact is not noticeable at so great a distance as it is in the case of the golden-eye and the buffle-head drakes.

Taken from: THE GUIDE TO NATURE

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WILD DUCK AND BIRDS SOMETIMES MISTAKEN FOR DUCKS.

Gull.

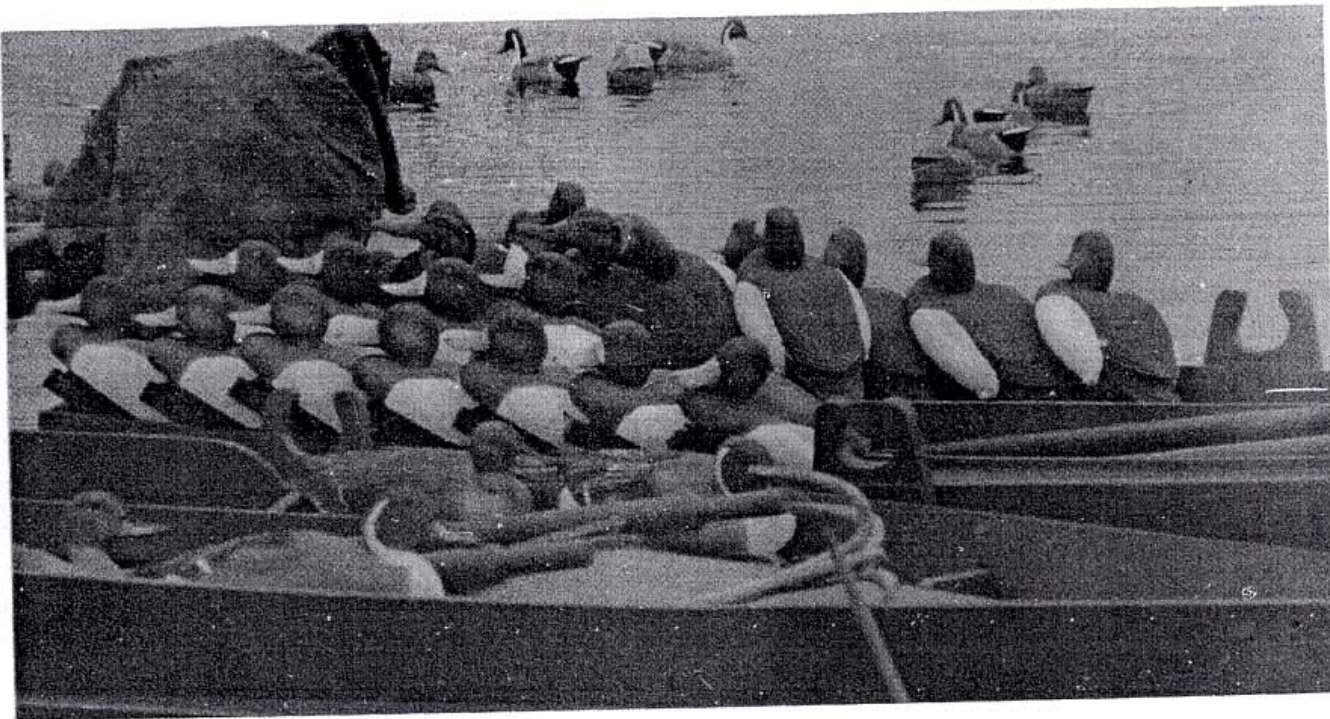
Coot.

Duck.

Pied-billed grebe.
Loon.

SPORT.-Barnegat Bay is all sport. In summer, hundreds of little vessels scud over its waters to the fishing-grounds near the inlet; and of the early mornings in winter, the figures of gunners may be seen dimly outlined against the gray horizon as they row their sneak-boxes out of the creeks toward some sedgy point or island. The earlier the start the better, for a few of the "shooting points" are considered to be more favorably located than the rest, and it is a gunners ambition to get his "man" to one of these points-that is, if he knows his man to be a first-rate sportsman. There is amusing rivalry between the different places along the bay shore for pre-eminence as sporting headquarters, especially between Forked River, Waretown and Barnegat. At Forked River they will tell you that at Barnegat you have to drive one and a half miles from the station to the landing, and that the gunners there are so numerous they will double up on the good "points". At Barnegat they will tell you that their landing, although one and a half miles from the station, is right on the bay, while at Forked River, although the landing is near the station, it is far up the creek, and that unless wind and tide are favorable you will be a long time reaching the bay. At both places they will say that, while Waretown is right on the bay, so that you have neither to drive to the landing nor to navigate a creek, the fact of there being no creek for a harbor makes landing there dangerous in stormy weather.

The reason these three places are rivals for pre-eminence as sporting resorts lies in the fact that the best fishing-grounds and shooting points are in their vicinity. The great summer sport is weak-fishing. Weakfish from one to one and threequarters pounds in weight can be caught in great numbers a short distance from the mouth of Forked River, while in Oyster Creek Channel, or in the Elbow near the inlet, the large "tiderunners" are almost equally numerous....Sheep's-head can also be caught in Oyster Creek Channel during July and August, while many king-fish are taken near Clam



Island....From February, or even earlier, if the bay is clear of ice, until May there is excellent sport fishing for flounder through holes in the coral beds formed by worms.

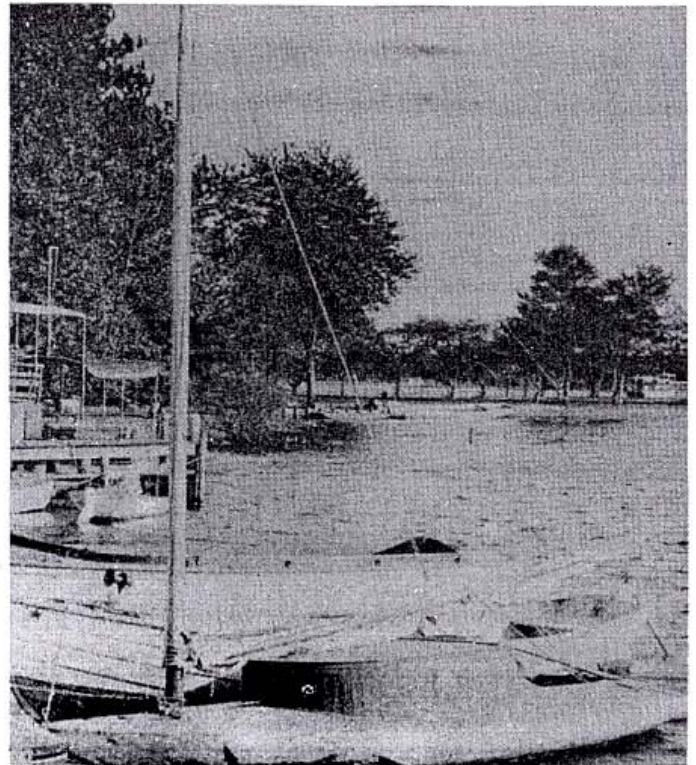
In point of fact, Waretown is the most favorably located of the three places for fishing excursions..... Nevertheless among sportsmen Forked River is considered the fishing headquarters for Barnegat Bay, and Barnegat the headquarters for gunning. Forked River undoubtedly owes much of its reputation among sportsmen to the fame of its comfortable, old-fashioned sporting house, the Lafayette, which for many years has been kept by old sheriff Parker.... The house is noted for its plain but delicious cooking, and the variety of fish, oysters, clams, crabs and game which the Sheriff makes a point of serving. To use his own expressive

phrase, he "feeds his guests off the bay"..... The house is picturesquely situated on the most northerly of the three branches which gave Forked River its name. On the south bank of this branch is one of those beautiful stretches of dark cedar swamp which add so much attractiveness of the scenes in this section of the coast, and which so temper the winter winds that the main shore of Barnegat Bay is a pleasant dwelling-place during the winter months.

The gunners make their headquarters at Barnegat because the principal shooting points are in its vicinity, Lovelady and Sandy Islands being considered the best points on the bay now that the sedge islands have become private. Nearly all the islands and points south of Stoudt's Creek, and whether on the main shore or beach are, however, resorted to by gunners.... The ducks which frequent Barnegat Bay are teal, broad-bills, blacks, red-heads, whistlers, mallards and shelldrakes; occasionally canvas backs stray up from the Chesapeake. From October 20th till December 1st, and March and April are the best periods for duck shooting on Barnegat Bay. Brant are plentiful in the spring. Goose shooting is followed with greatest success further up the bay, around Tom's River and Chadwick's.

In the woods back of the main shore are quail, rabbits, coons and foxes, and on the meadows English snipe.

Boating, fishing and gunning on Barnegat Bay are not expensive sports. One of the roomy, comfortable Barnegat Bay cat-boats with cabin, can be hired for \$4 a day. Bait is 75¢ a quart for shrimp; \$1 a dozen for soft-shell crabs.... Gunning is \$4 a day, the price covering boats and decoys....



Taken from; Kobbe's Jersey Coast and Pines (1889)

By; Gustav Kobbe'