

## MALLARDS RESTING IN TREES

On 6 February 1971 we were observing waterfowl in the Dune Lakes region 20 miles southwest of San Luis Obispo, California. A group of Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* was resting in some willows *Salix lasiolepis* growing on the banks of one of the lakes (this lake of approximately 55 acres was also surrounded by tules *Scirpus acutus*). Another group of Mallards was swimming, courting, and bathing in the water near the edge of the lake. After bathing, four males and two females ascended some of the willow branches projecting over the water. The birds used two movements to get from the water onto the branches. To get onto the lower branches (hanging less than six inches over the surface of the water) each bird swam toward the willows, extended its head and neck beyond the branch, placed one foot on it, and moved up and over the foot forcing the branch downward, while raising the other foot onto the branch. To reach higher branches (from six to twelve inches above the surface of the water) each bird elevated its wings slightly and jumped up, presumably by pushing in the water with its feet (the water was deep enough so that the birds could not stand on the bottom). In no instance did the birds fly onto the branches. The birds had difficulty getting onto the higher branches, and often fell back into the water. Most of the branches were quite small (less than one inch in diameter), and the birds actually curled their toes over the surface of the branches. Birds on the branches were observed sleeping (head into wing position) and preening. One of us (J.L.T.) has since been back to the lake and observed the same behavior on thirteen occasions. However, she has not seen Mallards perching in trees on any of the other lakes in the region even though the vegetational patterns are similar.

In June 1970, 1,000 Mallards were released into the area by a private hunting club. Some or all of the birds we observed could have been from this stock, and the possibility exists that the behavior of the introduced birds is different from the wild stock. We know of no reliable way to distinguish between wild Mallards and hatchery birds (see McKinney, 1969. The Behavior of Ducks. In: Behavior of Domestic Animals, Second Ed. E. S. E. Hafez ed.)

It is not unusual to see Mallards on land feeding, nesting, or preening. They nest in a variety of situations on the ground, in vegetation, on artificial nesting platforms, or even in trees (Bent, Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl I, Dover Publications, New York, 1962: 38; Cowardin, J., Wildl. Mgmt., 33: 840, 1969; Leuret, Ardea, 49: 126, 1961; Weidmann, Z. f., Tierpsych., 13: 256, 1956). However, nests in trees or artificial platforms require a large surface area. It is unusual to see Mallards utilizing small branches for resting places, and there are no reports in the literature of Mallards actually perching on small objects.—F. Russell Lockner, Department of Biology Sonoma State College, Rohnert Park, California 94928. Douglas D. Donaldson, Biological Sciences Department, California State Polytechnic College, San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo, California 93401 and Judith L. Tartaglia, Biological Sciences Department, California State Polytechnic College, San Luis Obispo, California 93401.