

## NEW ALTITUDE RECORD FOR MALLARD NESTING IN CALIFORNIA

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The Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is a year-around, widely distributed resident of California. It is known to breed at a great range of altitudes, from seacoast marshes to mountain lakes of the Sierra Nevada. Nests have been found as high as 1897 m (6225 ft) near Lake Tahoe (Grinnell, Bryant and Storer, *The Game Birds of California*, Univ. Calif. Press, 1918) and 2286 m (7500 ft) in Yosemite National Park (Grinnell and Miller, *The Distribution of the Birds of California*, Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 27, 1944). We have found no additional records indicating that Mallards breed higher than this in the Sierra Nevada. Therefore, we report herein our observations of a Mallard nest found in a subalpine meadow on the east side of Tioga Pass, Mono County, at an altitude of 3002 m (9850 ft).

The nest was discovered on 23 June 1973 when the female flushed from it as we walked by. The nest contained eight eggs. It was constructed primarily of dried grasses and sedges, lined with down, and located on the ground in a seepage area among clumps of scrub willow (*Salix* sp.). The site was about 600 m south of Tioga Lake and within 500 m of several small tarns.

During the 15 days following the discovery of the nest we checked it 12 times, always during the daytime. On five of these visits the female was incubating. On the other visits she was absent and the eggs were covered with nest material (four times) or uncovered (three times). Eight eggs were always present. When checked for the last time, on 8 July, the clutch showed signs of predation. Five eggs were gone without trace, one was empty and had a hole about 2.5 cm<sup>2</sup> on one side, and two were intact. The latter were taken as specimens and measured 4.14 x 5.57 cm and 4.23 x 5.76 cm.

We have spent six summers working on vertebrate populations in the Tioga Pass area and this is the first duck nest of any kind that we have found. Although Mallard nests at these heights must be considered rare, our observation does increase the altitude at which the species is known to breed in California by more than 2000 ft.