

courtship flight was very interesting. The note they used resembled somewhat, to my ear, that of the spotted sandpiper, but was repeated far oftener than is the case with that bird. Sometimes both birds would be in the air at once, but whether the female gave the note as well as the male, I could not definitely ascertain without shooting the birds, which I was very loath to do. The note would be given continuously for perhaps three or four minutes, during which time the bird flies slowly, with steady flapping of the wings, mounting in the air gradually until, when watching them in the evening, one loses sight of them in the gloom.

THE DUCKS.

Two ducks, the red-breasted merganser and the black duck, complete the enumeration of the ten breeding birds of Sable Island. Both these species were usually seen in pairs, but on one or two occasions five or six of the black ducks were seen together. The pairs that were seen of this species were doubtless birds to whose nest an accident had happened, as it was too late for the regular laying period, and Mrs. Boutilier had at the house a little duckling, which had been hatched from a nest found two or three weeks before ; and from a setting of last year she has two handsome wild black ducks that will come at call and feed from her hand.

The merganser was less common than the black ducks, and while I saw two birds on three different occasions, I judged them to be but one pair which had not yet begun to nest. Both these species are now much rarer than formerly, Mr. James Boutilier putting an estimate of their numbers at about three dozen pairs of the two species combined, on the whole island. This decrease is, of course, due entirely to the ravages of the foxes, and not, as frequently happens, through the persecution of man, as it is certain that few other ducks are favored with such complete protection as those receive that live on Sable Island. Not only is spring shooting prohibited, and the birds left to breed unmolested, but even in the fall, when the young are fully fledged and fit to be eaten, none of them are shot. The inhabitants control their appetite for duck until the northern birds are travelling south, and the ducks that really belong to Sable Island are left to