

LAW ENFORCEMENT SESSION

A METHOD OF TEACHING WATERFOWL IDENTIFICATION

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In many wildlife law enforcement cases the correct identification of wildlife specimens or evidence is a necessity. Skill in identification and counting is useful to officers assigned to periodical waterfowl "censuses," to banding or research operations and for determining population fluctuations at management or concentration areas. Many hunters and birders desiring help in learning how to identify waterfowl and migratory game birds can be helped by conservation officers.

Officers not located in waterfowl concentration areas do not have much opportunity to acquire "in-the-field" experience with waterfowl. Nevertheless, there are methods whereby these men can be given practice in identification. Such methods should be made a part of pre- or in-service training. An officer versed in identification of many kinds of wildlife — game or nongame — gains in confidence generally. His "professional" status as well as his public relation values improves.

A method of using 35 mm Kodachrome slides and mounted specimens is described. (There is no claim that this is a new method, but its use does not seem to be widespread in training wildlife officers.) We used this method at the third annual South Carolina Game Wardens' Clinic this past summer. To get started, a collection of waterfowl and migratory game bird slides were obtained through purchase from Dr. Arthur A. Allen, the National Audubon Society and several biological supply houses. We made additional slides by copying pictures, photographs, paintings and drawings from a large number of sources.

At the Wardens' Clinic the men were first given a "slide" test on 20 common waterfowl and other birds associated with or mistaken for waterfowl. A re-run of the Kodachrome slides enabled the men to score their own test and to receive instruction on how to identify. (The scores were low. This may have helped to increase the desire to learn.)

A modest set of mounted specimens of waterfowl and migratory game birds helped to round out the instructional material. Complete sets of mounted wings of waterfowl would have been most helpful.

Several hundred feet of film on waterfowl extended the instruction and gave the men a chance to test themselves in rapid identification as well as to practice "block counting." Such films can be obtained by department photography in waterfowl concentration areas, especially where the ducks and geese have lost some of their wildness. Some excellent footage was obtained at Gaddy's Pond in North Carolina, and at Federal refuges in South Carolina.

Publications, such as Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* and Kortright's *The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*, were displayed and recommended. Already many of our wardens own these two books.

The 35 mm Kodachrome slide method (combined with a "test," "recorded" instruction and brief films) can be used with almost any kind of a group — especially sportsmen, birders, youth organizations and teachers. We have had a chance to test it with several such groups. We find that it is adaptable in content and time requirements. It has been well-received — probably because there is initial audience-participation during the "test." (Undoubtedly similar results can be obtained — and possibly more effectively — through films. But 35 mm slide series are relatively cheaper.) To do a complete audio-visual job the basic equipment is a good 35 mm camera with copying attachments, slide projector, and tape-recorder with a loudspeaker playback system. Most departments now have most of this equipment. With accompanying tape-recorded or "plattered" instruction and slides, any field officer can put on an interesting program sent out from I & E.