

# FIRST OBSERVATIONS OF THE NORTHERN SHOVELER (*ANAS CLYPEATA*) ON THE ISLAND OF TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA

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This paper reports our observations of a Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*, Fig. 1) on the island of Tahiti (Society Islands). This rare migratory visitor to the region (Pratt et al. 1987) has not been previously reported from the Society Islands, but it has occurred at least once on Tikehau in the Tuamotu Archipelago (Holyoak and Thibault 1984).

We visited Phaeton Cove on the southern side of Tahiti 117 times between 14 April 1987 and 30 December 1989 to observe Gray Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*); during those visits we saw a single Northern Shoveler 19 times in that area; we also saw an individual 5 times in a bay of the isthmus, 2.5 km from the cove, and once at the mouth of the Faatautia River on the eastern side of Tahiti. The bird was always in the company of a flock of Gray Ducks, which varied in size between 3 and 68 individuals. The shoveler fed in a muddy area of Phaeton Cove at the edge of the lagoon. The dominant plant species there is a fern, *Acrostichum aureum*. The bay was used for roosting.

The bird first appeared in nuptial plumage, during a period of rainfall and high northeasterly winds between 13 and 22 April 1987. Plumage changes, as described by Cramp and Simmons (1977), during the rest of the observation period were recorded and are shown in Figure 2.

Nothing permits us to assert that our observations were of the same or several individuals, but we never saw more than one at Phaeton Cove during the 19 observations. It is interesting to note the time lag in the moulting cycle between 1987 and 1989. The individual observed was in eclipse plumage during September and November of 1987 and January and February of 1988; whereas, in 1989, a bird was seen in eclipse plumage in May and December. A possible explanation of this phenomenon could be that this boreal bird had altered its annual moulting cycle to match the reverse seasons of the southern hemisphere. This phenomenon has also been observed in *Anas clypeata* in New Zealand (Williams in Reader's Digest 1985).

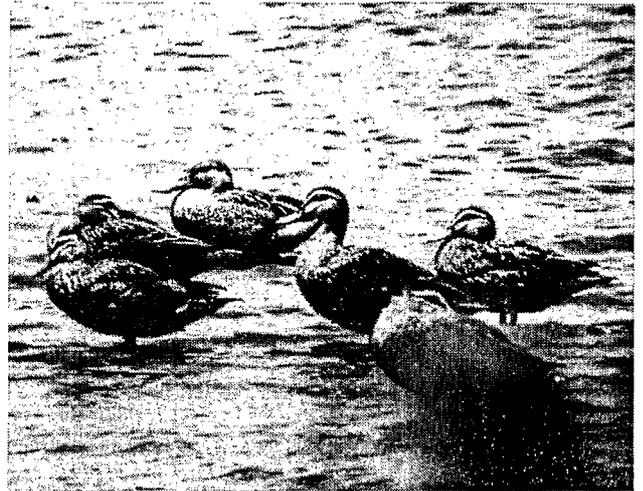


Figure 1. Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), at center, with Gray Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*) Phaeton Cove, Tahiti, 3 November 1988.

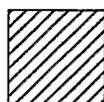
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Figure 2. Plumages of Northern Shoveler observed in Tahiti during 1987, 1988, and 1989.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1987				■	■				▨		▨	
1988		▨	▨	■	■							
1989					▨	■				■		▨



Eclipse plumage - Supplementary plumage.



Nuptial plumage.

ORSTOM Fonds Documentaire

N° : 37.641 ex 1

Cote : B

20 AVR. 1993