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SCAUP OR BROAD-BILL



Marila Marila

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THE scaup, commonly known in various parts of North America as the broad-bill, blue-bill, black-head, etc., is the larger of two species much alike in plumage. It is a more northern bird than the lesser scaup and more hardy, wintering mainly farther north than its smaller relative.

It ranges over the northern part of the world, south of the Arctic regions. In North America it breeds principally in the northwest, from the Aleutian Islands, northwestern Alaska, Great Slave Lake, and central Keewatin, south to southeastern British Columbia and northern North Dakota. It has bred casually east to the Magdalen Islands. It winters from Maine to Florida and the Bahamas, and from the Aleutian Islands, Nevada, Colorado and Lake Ontario south to southern California, southern New Mexico and southern Texas. It is rare in migration in Ungava, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

This species is so hardy that many individuals remain in the lakes of the northern interior until the waters are locked in ice, when the ducks must necessarily fly south or to the

nearest salt water. Thus if the autumn in the north is mild, some of these ducks fail to appear on the Atlantic Coast until the shooting season is nearly past, but about the middle of October flocks are met with in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and from southern New England to Chesapeake Bay they are common in winter, while farther south the lesser scaup usually predominates. The scaup is a diving duck and feeds largely on the roots, buds and stems of aquatic plants. In the salt water in winter it feeds much on surface-swimming marine animals as well as on mussels, which it gets by diving.

It is a swift-flying species, and when a pair passes before a gale of wind they will try the skill of the veteran sportsman. The broad-bill sometimes evinces considerable curiosity. I remember sleeping with gun by my side on the shore of a lagoon to shoot the blue-bills which came to me in the early morning light, attracted apparently by curiosity. I have seen them swim up to a dead duck supported in the water by a stick thrust up its neck and down into the mud.