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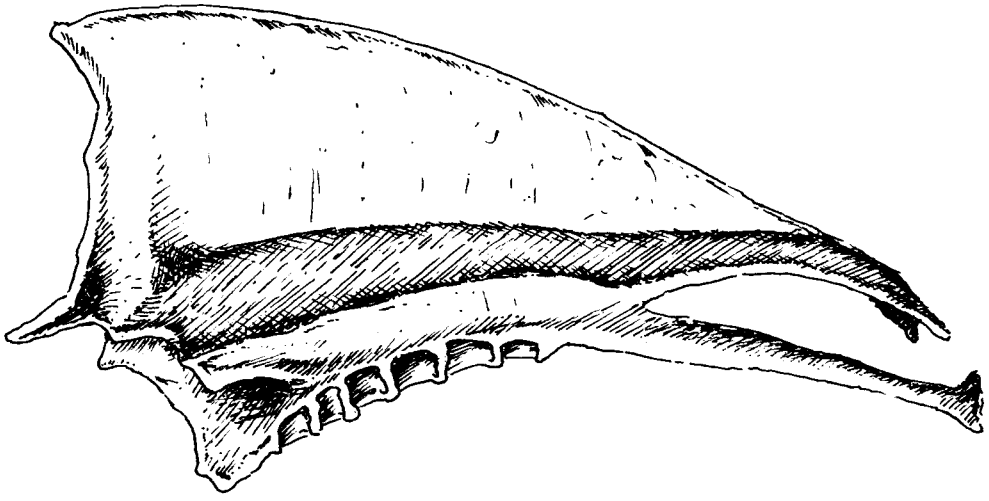
Key to Identification of Duck Breastbones

David W. Oates
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

WATERFOWL BREAST BONE



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
2200 North 33rd, Lincoln, NE, 68503

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Contact: David W. Oates
Forensic and Analytical Specialist

W-82-R

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See A and B for terminology used.

1. Caudal process appears to be a circular to rectangular appendage attached to the caudal ridge (B) - **oldsquaw**
   Caudal process absent or other than above - Go To 2

2. (1) Ventral manubrial spine: forked single spine (C) - **ruddy duck**
   Ventral manubrial spine not as above - Go To 3

3. (2) Dorsal lip of the coracoidal sulcus with a depression in its center (D) Go To 4
   Dorsal lip of the coracoidal sulcus lacking a depression (E) - Go To 12

4. (3) Lateral processes broad cranially, narrow caudally (F) - **scoters**
   Lateral processes not as above - Go To 5

5. (4) Lateral processes uniformly thick throughout length, extend beyond end of keel, apex curved inward (G) - Go To 6
   Lateral processes not as above - Go To 7

6.*(5) Dorsal length > 8.0 cm - **common eider, king eider**
   Dorsal length < 8.0 cm - **harlequin duck**

7. (5) 2 ventral manubrial spines - Go To 8
   0 ventral manubrial spines - Go To 9

8. (7) Ventral manubrial spines project prominently past ventral lip of coracoidal sulcus (H) (At times the spines are not as prominent as those shown at the top of Illustration H. They may look more like the bottom of Illustration H. The spines are still more widely spaced than on all other Aythya) - **canvasback**
   Ventral manubrial spines do not project prominently past ventral lip of coracoidal sulcus (I) - other members of Aythya - **diving ducks**

9. (8) Caudal process extends past caudal ridge only between sternal notches (J) - Go To 10
   Caudal process not as above - Go To 11

10.*(9) Dorsal length > 7.6 cm - **common merganser, red-breasted merganser**
   Dorsal length < 7.6 cm - **hooded merganser**

11. (9) Caudal process extends beyond the caudal ridge across the entire (May appear like dotted segment of Illustration K in younger birds. Caudal process would still be considerably wider than that found in mergansers) breastbone including the lateral processes (K) - **common goldeneye, Barrow's goldeneye**
   Caudal process not as above - **bufflehead**

12. (3) Lateral processes uniformly thick throughout length, longer than the caudal end of the keel and curved inward (G) - **Steller's eider**
   Lateral processes not as above - Go To 13

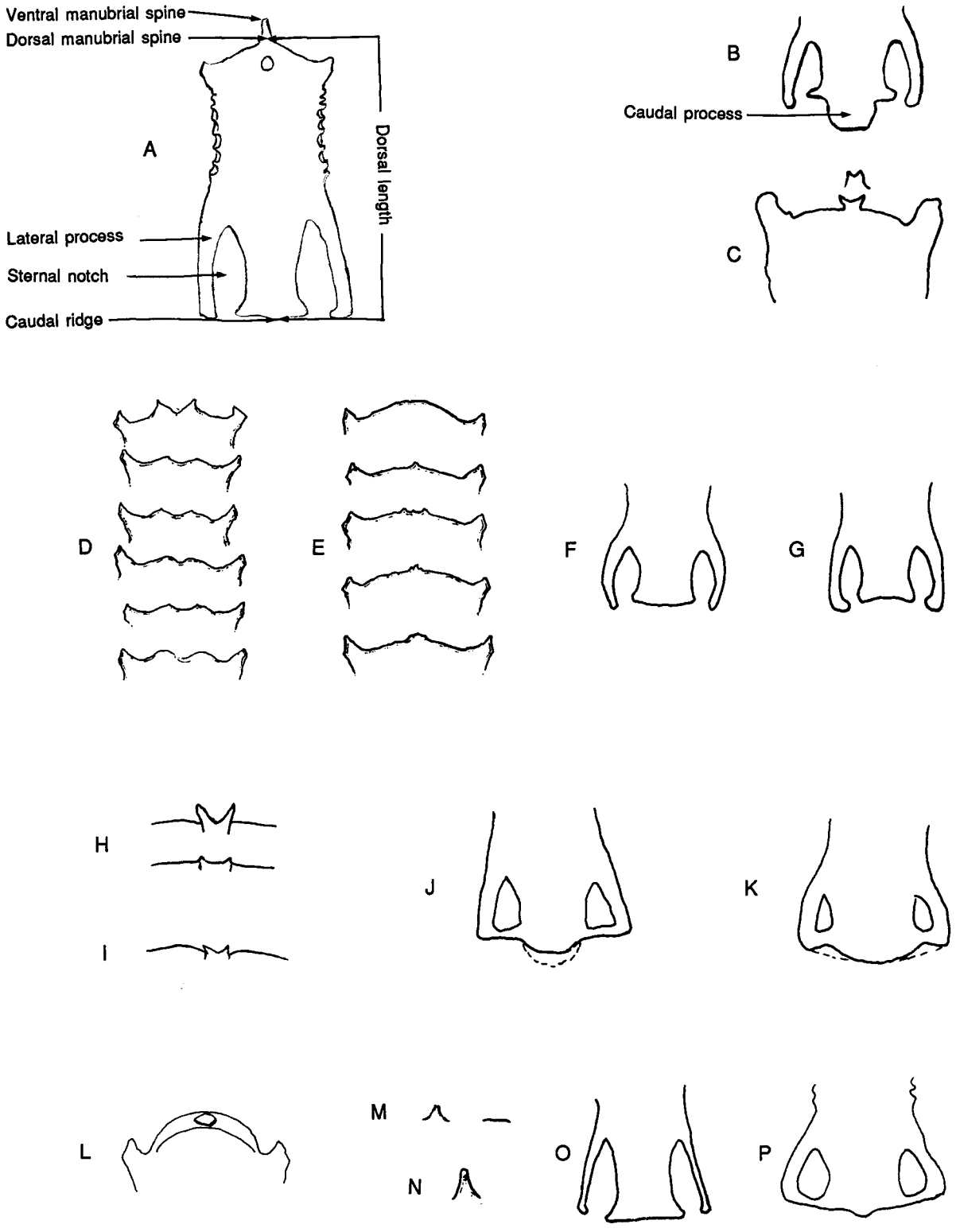
13.(12) Dorsal manubrial spine platelike (L) - **black-bellied whistling duck, fulvous whistling duck**
   Dorsal manubrial spine not as above - Go To 14

14.(13) Ventral manubrial spine short to nonexistent (M) - Go To 15
   Ventral manubrial spine long and thin (N) - Anas - **dabbling ducks**

15.(14) Sternal notch open (O) - **wood duck**
   Sternal notch enclosed (P) - Go To 16

16.*(15) Dorsal length > 6.6 cm - **common goldeneye, Barrow's goldeneye**
   Dorsal length < 6.6 cm - **bufflehead**

* > = greater than, < = less than



Illustrations A-P. Characteristic features of waterfowl breastbones used to determine genera.