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TWO HYBRID DIVING DUCKS AT CUNNINGHAM LAKE, DOUGLAS COUNTY
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During the spring of 1997 I had the opportunity to observe and study two apparent hybrid diving ducks at Glenn Cunningham Lake, Douglas County. Both birds appeared to be mature males in breeding plumage. One bird was a suspected Redhead x Canvasback hybrid and the other was a suspected Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrid. Sibley (1994) states that both hybrid combinations occur "occasionally."

The Redhead x Canvasback hybrid was observed on 11-19 March. The hybrid associated exclusively with Redheads, even though Canvasbacks were relatively close at times. The overall size of the bird was similar to that of a Redhead, although the back appeared broader. The head shape was intermediate between the two suspected parental species. The forehead was sloped more than a Redhead's, but the overall head shape was rounder than that of a Canvasback. The "rear" portion (uppertail and undertail coverts and tail) was black, as was the breast. The mid-portion of the body was a pale, silvery gray, intermediate between the two suspected parental species. The head was colored a bright chestnut, with no darker or black markings towards the crown or

bill. The iris color was red. The bill length was similar to that of a Redhead, but the structure was reminiscent of a Canvasback. The bill appeared rather dark, although the tip was noticeably darker. On the topside of the bill, there was a pale area of light blue immediately adjacent to the black tip. The sides of the bill, below the nostrils, also showed a lightening, although this could only be observed under ideal light conditions. The very base and the area near the cutting edge of the bill were black.

Haramis (1982) described seven Redhead x Canvasback hybrids (specimens or trapped birds), but only one was taken with Redheads; it was also the only one that possessed an all-dark bill with faint-blue patches near the base. The other six hybrids were taken or captured in Canvasback flocks, and all possessed bills that were colored like that of a Redhead. The bird that I observed, and presumably the other dark-bill hybrid mentioned in Haramis (1982), appeared very much like a Common Pochard, with the exception of the bill.

The suspected Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrid was observed 15-19 March. The accompanying photograph shows the overall appearance of the bird, which associated with Common Goldeneyes. The size was comparable to that of the two suspected parental species. This bird had a more peaked head shape than a Hooded Merganser, but it had a short crest like a Hooded Merganser. The upperparts were primarily black. The folded wing showed white patches similar to that of a Common Goldeneye. The long tertials were white with black fringing, like a Hooded Merganser. The bird had two black vertical bars on the side of the breast, similar to, but not as bold, as on a Hooded Merganser. The vermiculations of the flanks were similar to those of a Hooded Merganser, but were gray rather than rufous. The head was a solid, metallic green, similar to the head of a Common Goldeneye. The iris color was gold. The bill shape was longer and slimmer than the bill of a Common Goldeneye, but broader at the base than that of a Hooded Merganser. The bill was all black.



Just as the morphological features of this bird appeared confused, so did the behavior. One morning I was observing it with a group of 32 male Common Goldeneyes, who were actively performing "head throws." The apparent hybrid, caught up in all the excitement, was also performing. The display started with the head gently being brought down and forward, similar to the movement of a Common Goldeneye before the head is thrown backwards. Rather than directly proceeding with the head throw, the bird would pause for a second or two, looking as if it were paralyzed with confusion. Finally, it would dispassionately raise its head straight up as far as possible.

LITERATURE CITED

- Haramis, G.M. 1982. Records of Redhead x Canvasback hybrids. *Wilson Bulletin* 94:599-602.
- Sibley, D. 1994. A guide to finding and identifying hybrid birds. *Birding* 26:162-177.
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