

12/2/81
Seymour, Iowa 52590
Dec. 1, 1981

Dear Tom,

I am enclosing an account of the sojourning shelducks. If it is newsworthy you can pass it on to Petersen. The only other thing I have to report is an early appearance of a Snowy Owl, on Oct. 30 at the Benny Davis lake between Corydon and Promise city.

In Oct. the Don Carpenters who live 5 miles north of Promise City called me to help identify 2 ducks--geese that had been seen on their pond and other ponds in the vicinity for about two months. With the help of WILDFOWL OF THE WORLD, Soothill & Whitehead, we identified them as a pair of Ruddy Shelducks, native to central and southern Asia. They are large ducks, rusty body, black tail, creamy buff head and neck. The female has a white face and the male a black collar. They are beautiful in flight when the metallic wing speculum and large white wing patches are visible.

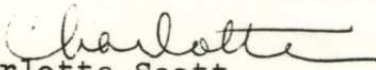
They seem to enjoy the shallow muddy pond and eating shelled corn with the Carpenters' hogs.

Many birders have been to see them, speculating as to how they arrived in southern Iowa. Most of us felt they were escapees from an exotic fowl farm.

Due to a strange chain of events we learned of such a farm owned by Jerry Prokes and about 25 miles as the Shelduck flies from the Carpenter farm. Upon investigation we found that a pair of shelducks had been missing since April. The owners still have one pair which were purchased at the same time as the escapees.

I and others who have seen both pair doubt very much that they are the same ducks that belonged to the Prokes. The C-ducks are $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size of the P-ducks. The C-ducks are strong fliers and very much wild ducks in that no one approaches them closely. The P-ducks make no effort to fly and act like any domesticated duck. And, of course, there is a 2-3 month interval between disappearance and sighting.

However, it's anybody's guess! The interesting question will be, "Can they establish themselves in the wild in southern Iowa?" As of Dec. 1, they are doing well.


Charlotte Scott