

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Opportunistic breeders, Northern Pintails are renowned for their ability to take advantage of suitable nesting habitats wherever they are encountered (Bellrose 1976). When wetlands are plentiful in the “Prairie Pothole” region of central North America, most nesting pintails will be found in the prairies with relatively few at the margins of their breeding range. Conversely, prolonged drought in the prairies will cause pintails to wander in search of suitable habitats, and greater numbers of nonbreeders plus a few nesting pairs will appear in Ohio and other locations at the edge of their range. Hence, their summering numbers within Ohio vary from year to year in response to habitat conditions far removed from the state.

Their summer status in the marshes bordering western Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay has always been obscured by a relatively high proportion of nonbreeders. As early as the 1930s, Hicks (1935) considered many of these summering pintails to be nonbreeders. In later decades, reports of pintails comprising 2% of the summering duck population along western Lake Erie (Andrews 1952) and 60 pairs in the Winous Point marshes (Ottawa County) (Anderson 1960) undoubtedly pertained to nonbreeders. The first nesting attempts were discovered in 1930 and 1937, but no other nests were reported until the 1960s when small numbers of breeding pairs became regular residents within these marshes (Campbell 1968).

A small breeding population still resides along western Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay. During the Atlas Project, nesting was confirmed or mated pairs were observed at four sites in Ottawa and Lucas counties; additional sightings of probable migrants and nonbreeders were not mapped. These records indicate that only a few marshes regularly host nesting pintails and the total breeding population may be fewer than 10 pairs during most years.

Away from western Lake Erie, Northern Pintails are accidental summer residents within the northern and central counties (Peterjohn 1989a). Most records are of nonbreeding individuals. Prior to the Atlas Project, the only confirmed inland nesting attempts were from Pymatuning Lake in Ashtabula County during 1936 and 1937 (Baird 1936, Walker 1937a). The Atlas Project produced isolated nesting attempts in Seneca County in

1984 and at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area (Wyandot County) in 1986. During 1989, a brood was probably successfully raised at Delaware Wildlife Area (Delaware County) (Peterjohn 1989b).

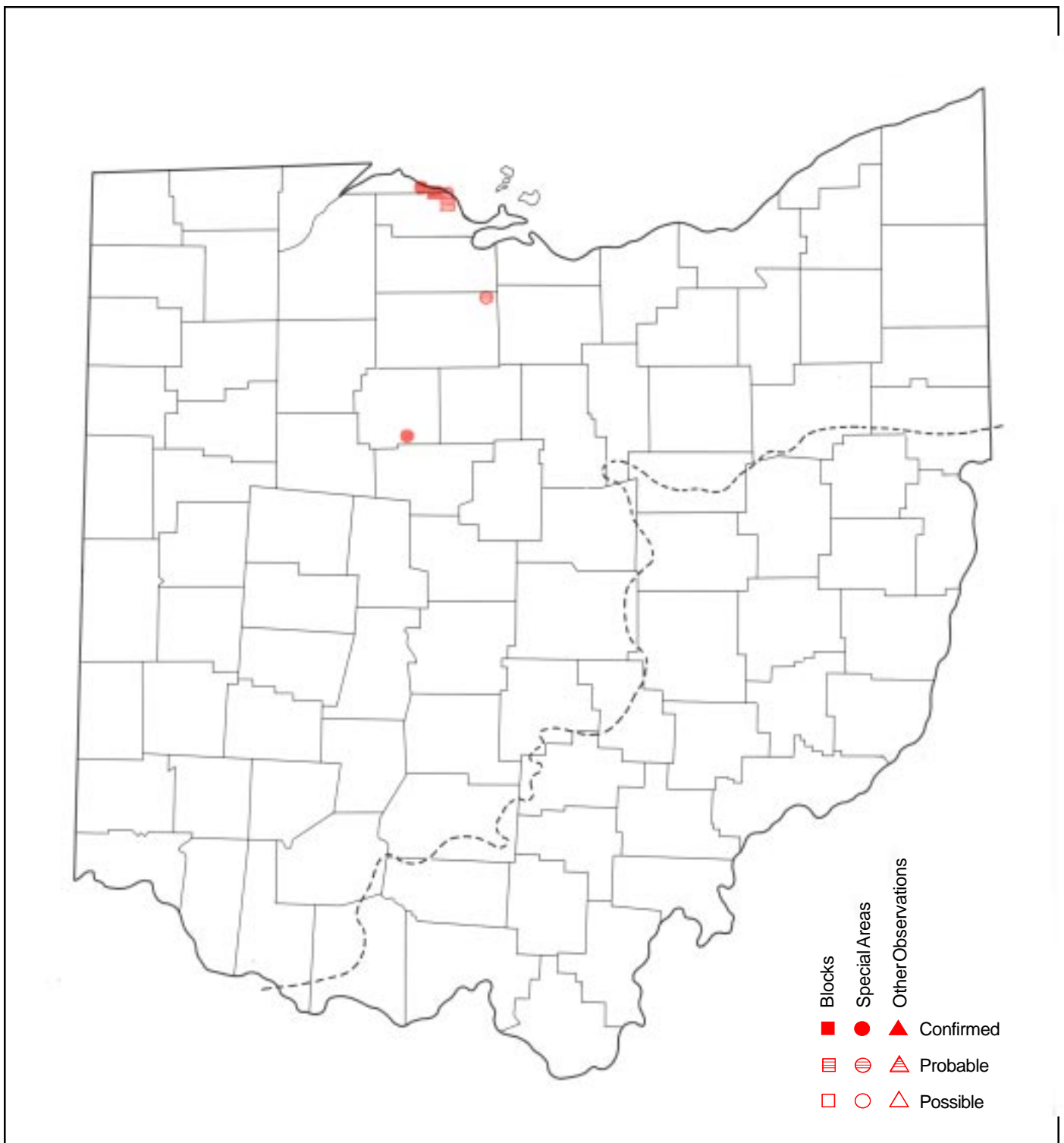
Within Ohio, breeding Northern Pintails invariably occupy large wetlands surrounded by grass-covered dikes, hayfields, or other suitable nesting habitats. While they reside in similar habitats elsewhere in their range, breeding pintails are also known to inhabit bogs, wet tundra, and the margins of arctic tidal flats



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(Palmer 1976, Peck and James 1983). Their nests are placed on the ground, either in dense grassy cover or under shrubs and small trees. These nests may be a few feet to 300+ feet from the water's edge.

Their nesting chronology is poorly documented within Ohio. The only published egg dates are May 17 and “June” (Campbell 1940, Hicks 1935), while adults accompanied by small young have been reported during June and the first half of July. However, their Ohio nesting chronology is probably similar to that described for Ontario (Peck and James 1983), where territorial activities begin during April and egg dates extend between April 10 and June 30.



Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

Physiographic Region	Total Blocks Surveyed	Blocks with Data	% with Data	Regional % for Ohio	Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987)
Lake Plain	95	2	2.1	100.0	—
Till Plain	271	—	—	—	—
Ill. Till Plain	46	—	—	—	—
Glaciated Plateau	140	—	—	—	—
Unglaciated Plateau	212	—	—	—	—

Summary of Breeding Status

No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded		
Total	2	0.3%
Confirmed	1	50.0%
Probable	1	50.0%
Possible	—	—