

Too Much Lamb Coming To Market

A quarter of a million lambs—most since the war—are fattening in Pacific Northwest feedlots for the region's consumers, Harold Cohn of Heppner, chairman of the lamb promotion committee of the Oregon Wool Growers association, said in announcing plans for a "Midwinter Lamb Festival."

"We want all consumers to know about and take advantage of the oversupply of fine lamb that is coming to market in the next six weeks or so, Cohn said.

Dates for the "Midwinter Lamb Festival" are December 10 to January 15, and a regional producers' committee has been named to acquaint both retailers and consumers with the abundant supplies and low price of lamb.

"Many retailers are planning special promotions in the week-end of December 11-13 to launch the festival," Cohn said.

The Surf Scoter



Surf Scoter
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"What are they?" Mac shouted, his voice scarcely audible above the pounding of the surf. From far up the coast an irregular flock of chunky black birds was flying toward us, following the curves of the shoreline as though reticent to cross a single cape. Must be scoters, I mused, but which one of the three?

Soon they were among the sweets not far from us. Even at a distance we could see them hit the water belly-first and plow along a moment with dark wings elevated like gulls. Surf Scooters! No other ducks will land like that. Though inconspicuous, these are among the common off-shore birds to winter along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and on the Great

Lakes from mid-September to the end of May.

Through the spotting scope we confirmed our judgment. It was a flock of adults. We could distinguish the Roman-nose profile and a bit of red on the thick bill. The all-black body, white forehead and nape of the male were clearly visible. No wonder folks call them *skunk-heads*. Coot is another popular nickname. Although this 20-inch sea duck is much larger than the true coot, it is dark like that 15-inch quiet-water bird. The female scoters (rhymes with motor) were brown with a dark crown and light patches before the eyes.

The flock drifted in among the white-topped breakers. These fellows were as much at home here as in the smoother water. As a wave crest curved high above one, about to plunge down upon it, the duck up-ended with an awkward splashing of wings and disappeared, to pop up like a bit of driftwood on the other side.

There is nothing clumsy about the surf scoter under water, however. Its body is stoutly built to withstand great pressures; it feeds commonly at depths to 40 feet. Often it dives when wounded or to escape danger and will even plunge directly from flight. Blue mussels are its major food, but it also eats other mollusks, crustaceans, sea plants and insects. Studies have shown, however, that it does no appreciable harm to shall fisheries. Because the adult takes only about 12 per cent plant food, its flesh is rank

and unpalatable. Consequently it is not taken by duck hunters.

On land, man's normal habitat, this diving duck is clumsy and ill at ease. Its world is one of spume and breaking seas, green ocean depths and wind-blown skies. It may not be good eat-

ings, says the National Wildlife Federation, but the surf scoter is a most interesting fellow to have around.—By George Burrows, Cornell University.

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