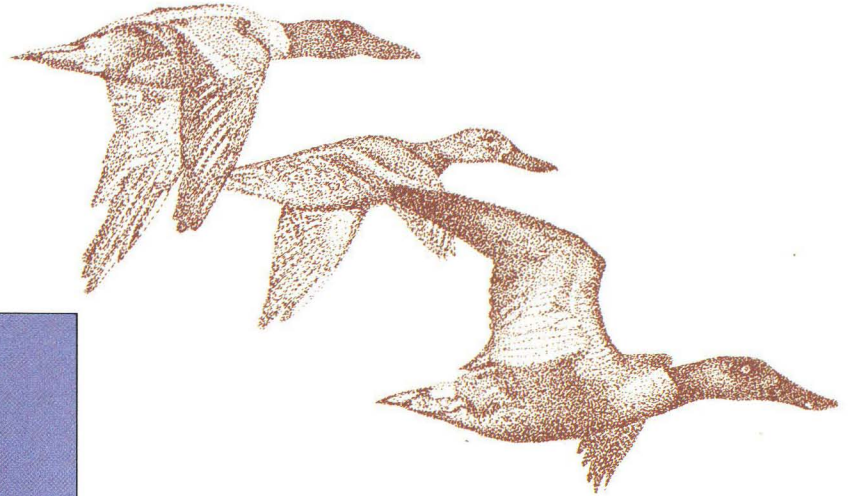
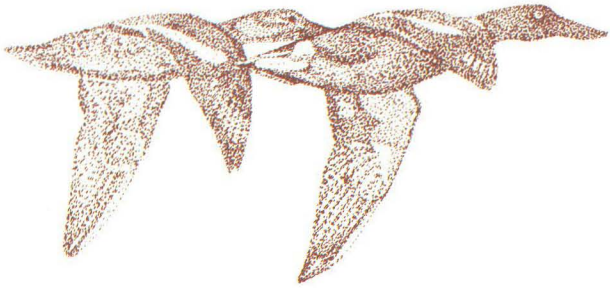


DUCKS





text and photos
by Mike Blair
Staff Photographer

The silent stroke of an ancient clock whose pendulum swings between the equinoxes stirs them, rallies them to their journeys. In their passage is the echo of places far away, a mystery of migration, a changing of the seasons.

You'll see them, fresh from Wyoming or Texas, in the vestiges of wilderness fugitive to the '80s. Not large areas, or perforce remote, but in places where the wind blows clean, where the cordgrass rustles.

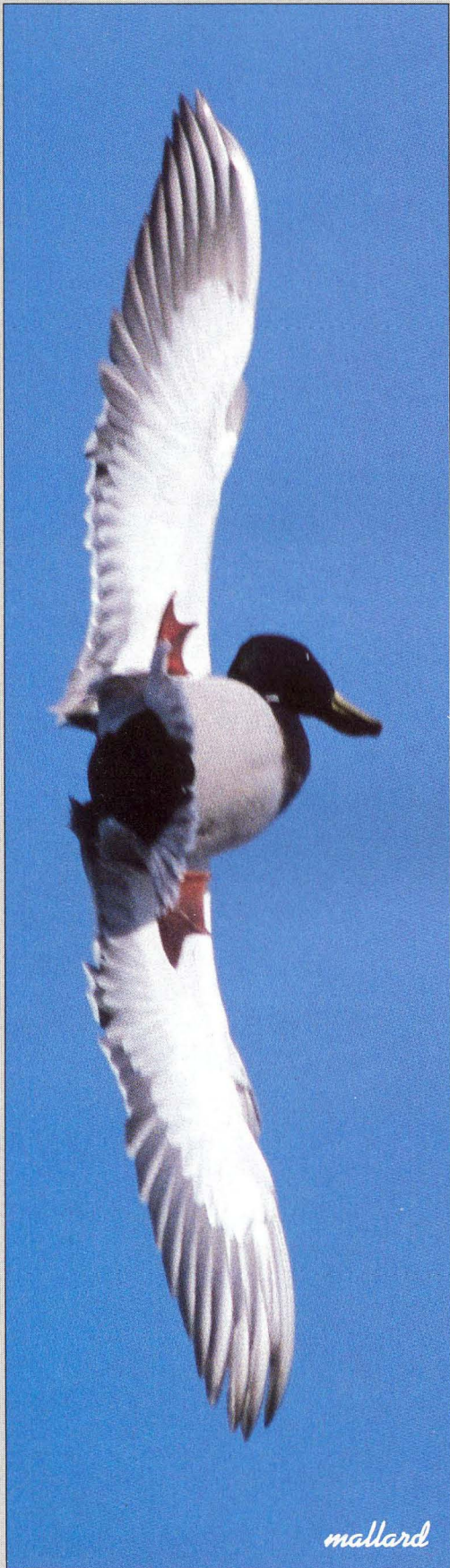
Places like Mr. Johnson's slough or the upper end of the city lake. Cattail ponds or hidden springs. Duck places . . .

Long live Quivira and Cheyenne Bottoms, Indian haunts where the echo of wild wings invites each new flight to rest in the habitude of winged ancestry!

Long live Marais des Cygnes, where flooded timber lifts its craggy arms to welcome the sky riders, pouring from dark clouds in search of refuge.

Long live the Ninnescah and Arkansas and cousin rivers that feed and guide the birds across their Kansas passage.

And long live God's wondrous travelers:
Ducks . . .



mallard



wigeon



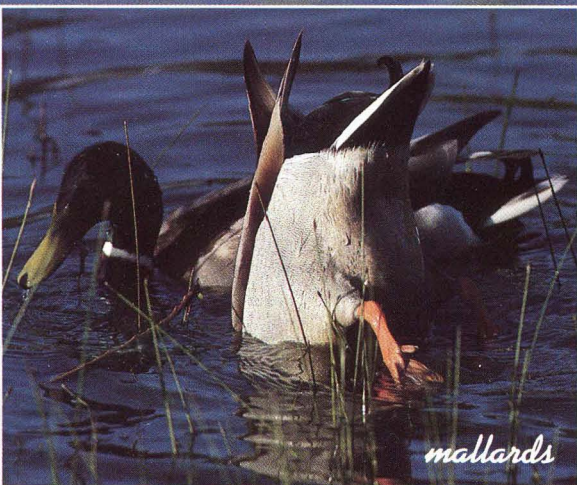
cinnamon teal



mallard



blue-winged teal

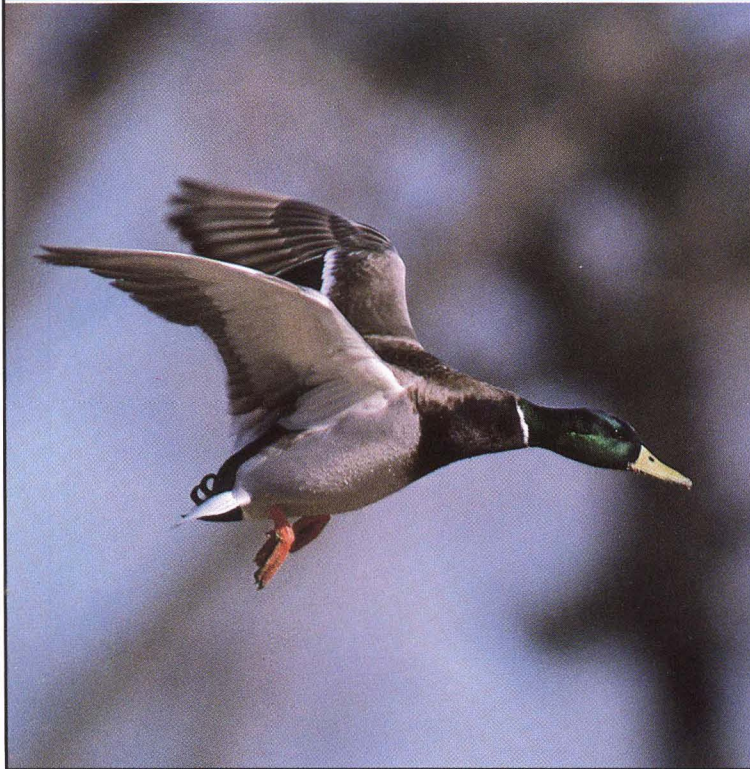
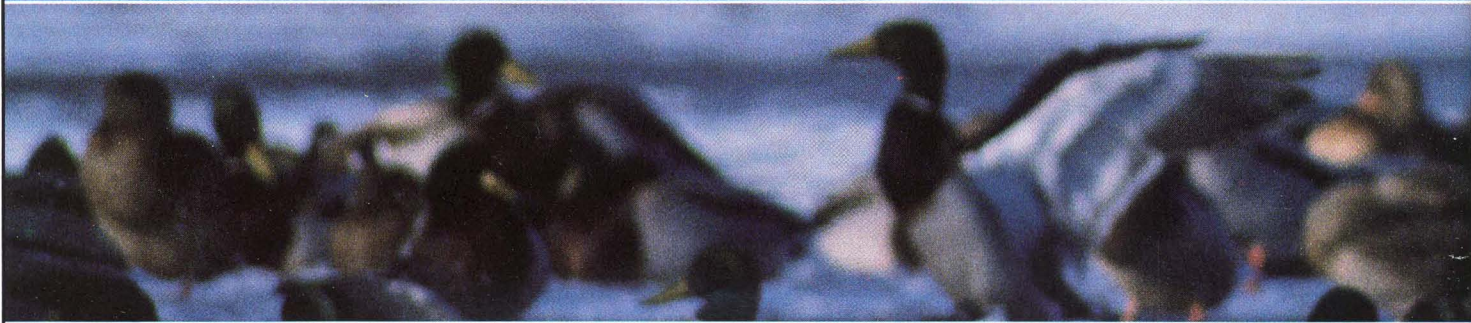


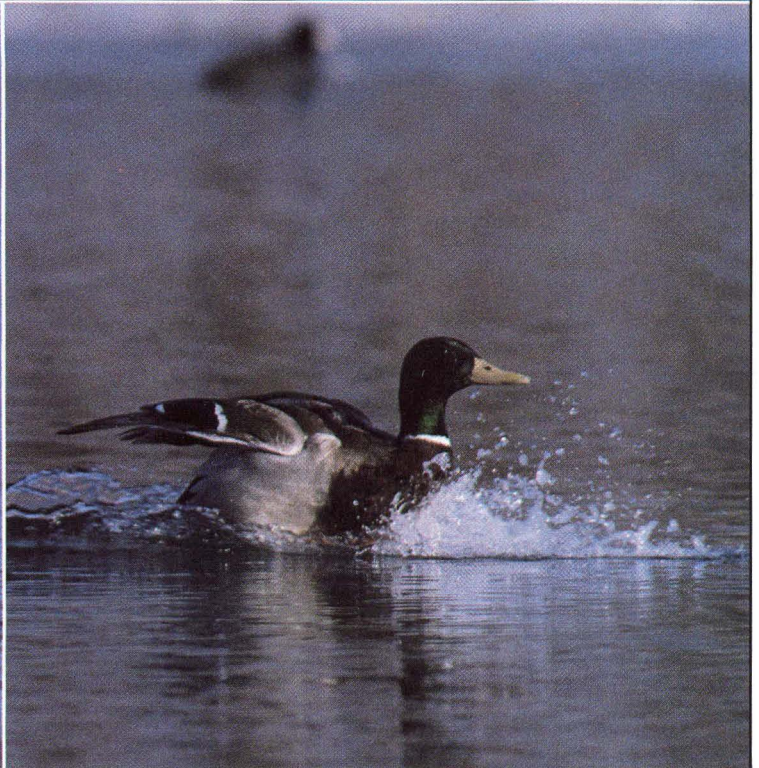
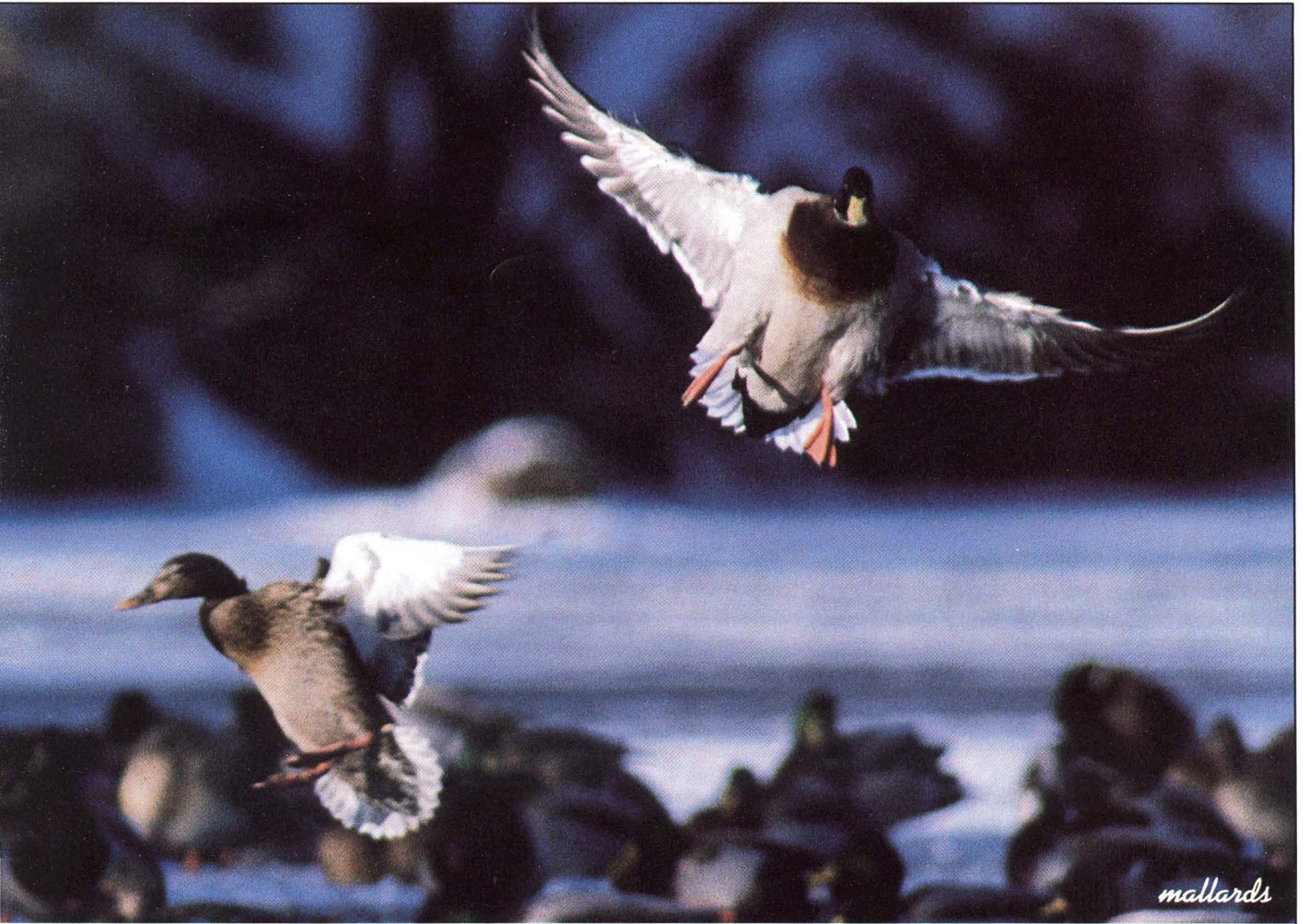
mallards

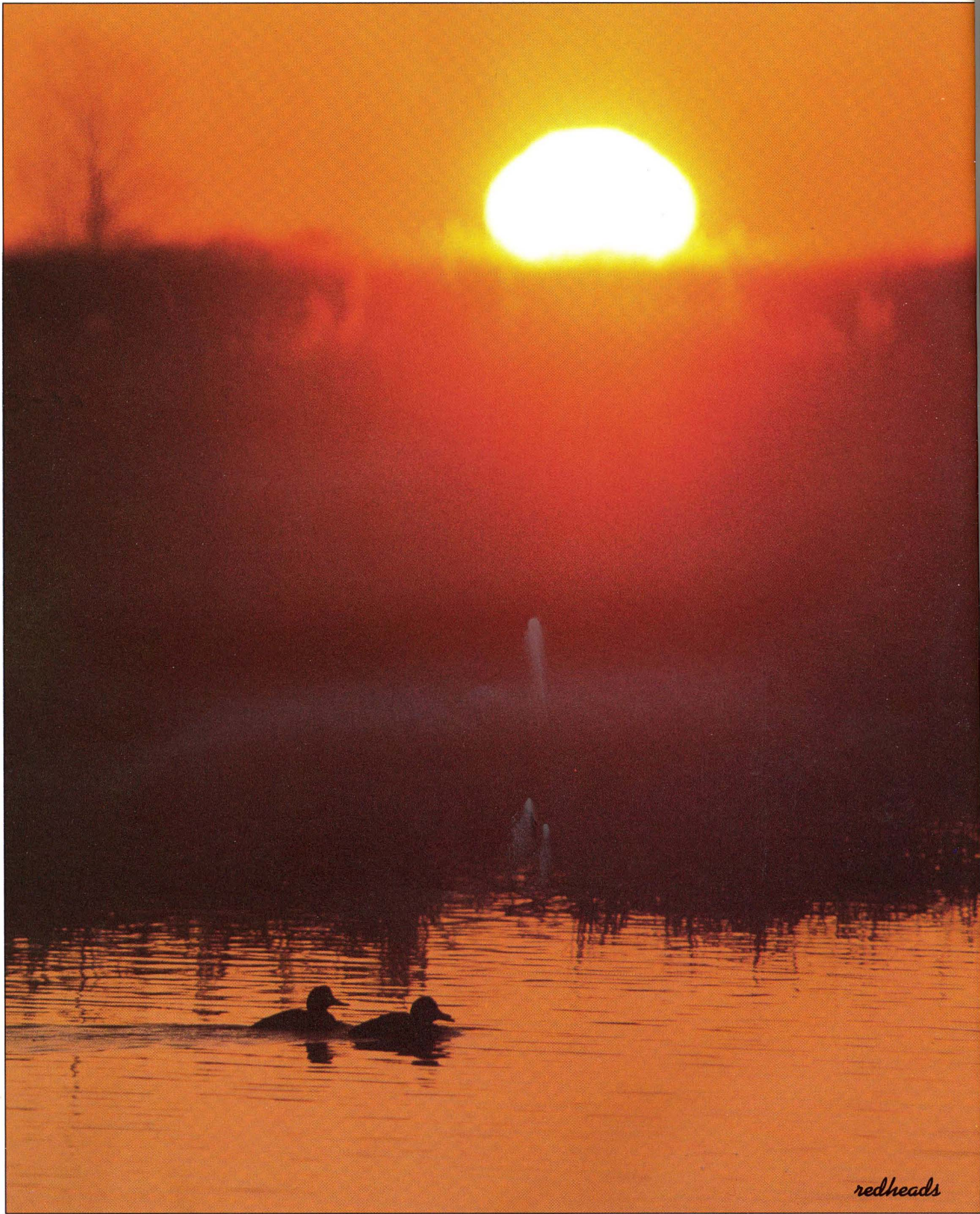


redheads









redheads

DUCKS

A cloud of droplets trails southward as the first bluewings bid farewell to Canadian homes. Inexorably, hardier kin follow as the sun recedes. The flyway darkens with moving ducks, though not in former numbers. Still, their whistling wings are magic to the earthbound.

To lift strong wings and meet the clouds, to float in the shade of a dappled pond or fight the sting of a blowing snow — these are the ways of ducks.



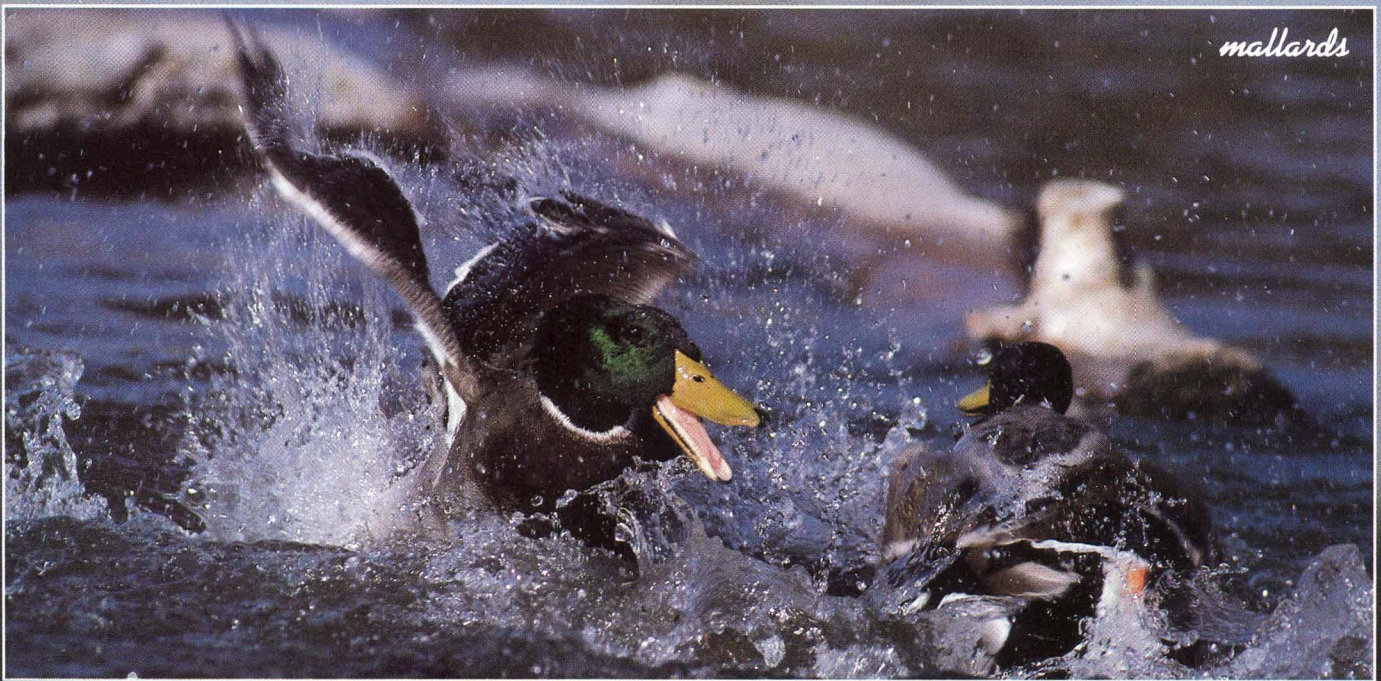
mallard



pintails and green-winged teal



green-winged teal



mallards

canvasback



mallard

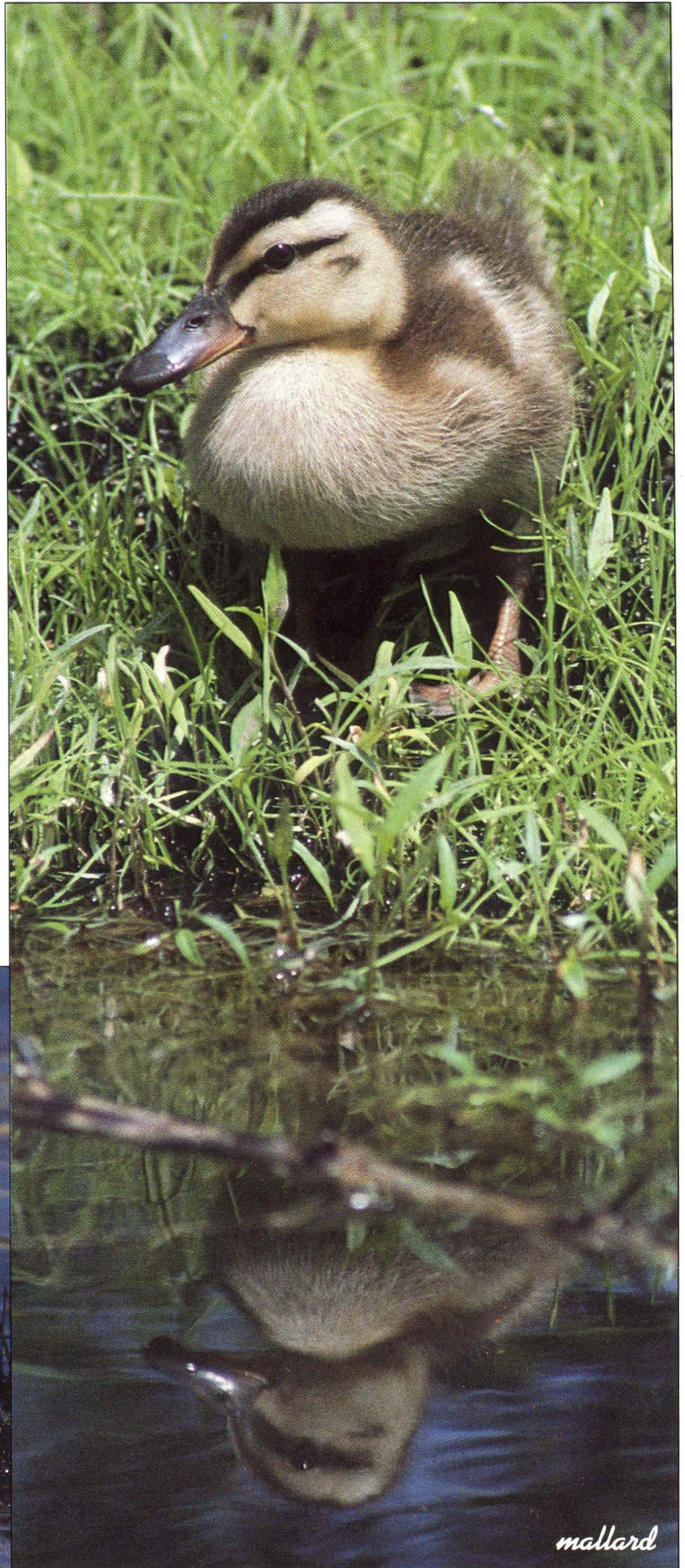


DUCKS



The sun's finest image gleams in a duck's eye, often twain: A diamond reflection from the sky and another from the water. Look deep — you'll see its living energy and sense some vast connection between star and bird too deep for understanding.

Where wind meets wing, there is a potent sound, a rending that bespeaks the freedom of flight and causes men to dream. I listen as it tears the sky, tracing the paths of wild ducks descending to join their resting kin. And I wonder . . .

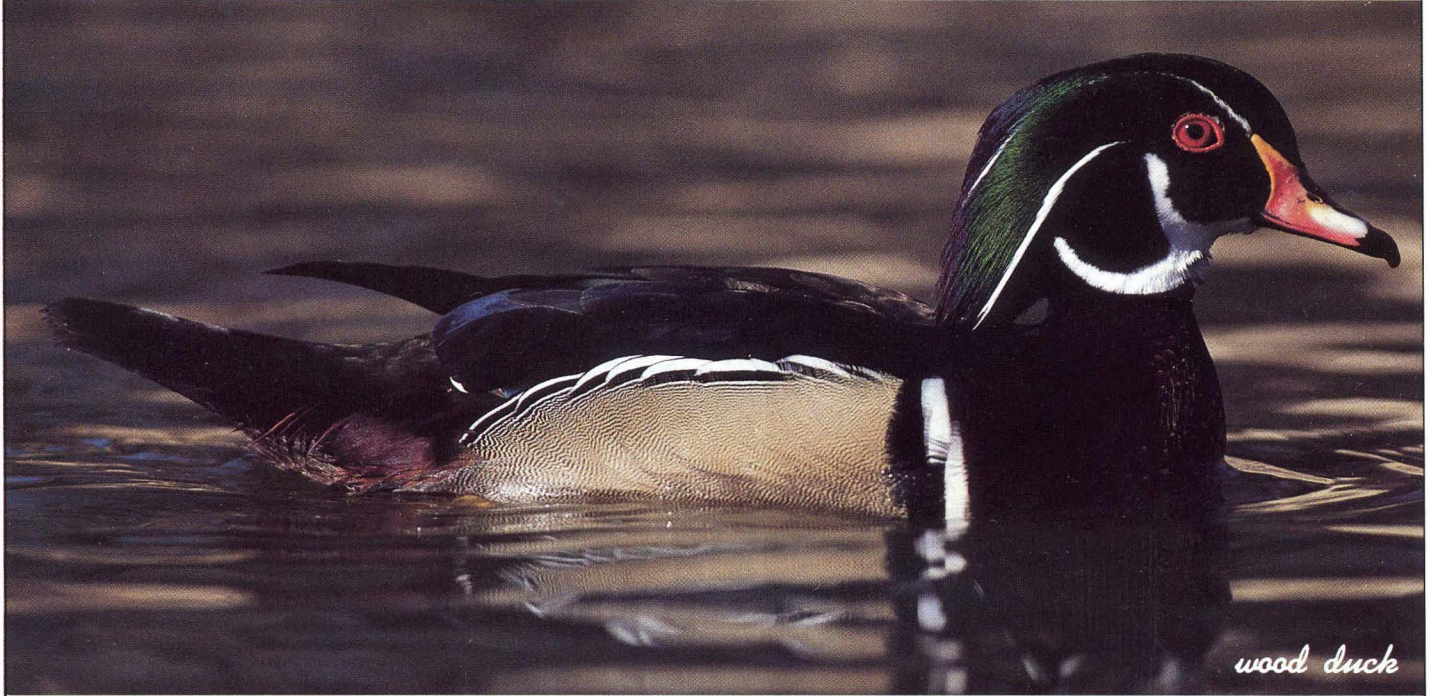


mallard

mallard



hooded merganser



wood duck



shovelers