

THE BARROW'S GOLDENEYE IN NEW YORK

By KENNETH C. PARKES

In 1944, Edwin M. Hasbrouck published a paper (1) which attempted to summarize all known records of Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) in North America east of Duluth, Minnesota. Unfortunately, many inaccuracies found their way into his summaries, an almost unavoidable circumstance considering the scope of the paper. Ludlow Griscom has published a critique (2) of that portion of Hasbrouck's paper dealing with Massachusetts. He includes a thorough discussion of the question of field identification of this species, a discussion which is recommended to all bird students. It will suffice here to emphasize that little or no credence can be given to the vast majority of sight records of plumages other than the fully adult male in breeding plumage; the latter, however, may easily be recognized by the several diagnostic points mentioned by Griscom.

There are nineteen entries in Hasbrouck's list of New York records of Barrow's Goldeneye. These will be reviewed, certain other records mentioned, and the known status of the species in New York re-evaluated.

The first record cited by Hasbrouck is a composite of statements by Elliot (3) and Eaton (4). Elliot's statement reads, "I have found it at times quite numerous on the St. Lawrence near Ogdensburg, and have killed a goodly number there over decoys, and some specimens, procured there on these occasions, are now in the Museum of Natural History in New York." Eaton adds a definite date and number, as follows: "... Dr. D. G. Elliot found it fairly common in 1865, and took nearly 40 specimens." I have been unable to locate this information elsewhere in published form, and it is possible that Eaton obtained it directly from Elliot.

These figures are so much at variance with the numerical status of the species in New York that I asked Dr. John T. Zimmer of the American Museum of Natural History to verify the presence of the specimens mentioned by Elliot as being in that museum. Dr. Zimmer has written me as follows:

"We have, from the Elliot collection, five specimens of Barrow's Goldeneye, all at one time mounted but four now in the skin collection. Identification is correct.

"According to the catalogue of the pertinent numbers, all five are from Ogdensburg, N. Y., but one of the birds has a notation on the back of the label as follows: 'The five specimens obtained within the limits of the United States. Procured at Washington Market Jany. 10, 1882.'

'The five specimens' presumably refers to the five birds in the Elliot Collection. 'Procured at Washington Market' may refer only to the bird on whose label it is written. If it applies to all five birds, something is decidedly wrong. In any case, the catalogue entry of 'Ogdensburg' for that specimen is open to question . . .

"This is all the information available here. If Elliot shot nearly 40 specimens at Ogdensburg, it is unfortunate that he did not save more of them."

To Dr. Zimmer's remarks I can only add that there is a marked discrepancy between the year cited by Eaton (1865) and that on the only dated specimen in the Elliot Collection (1882). This makes it seem even less probable that this specimen is one of those mentioned by Elliot and Eaton. It is impossible to tell from Elliot's writings whether the reported abundance of Barrow's Goldeneye on the St. Lawrence was a phenomenon limited to a single season or a general abundance for a number of years.

The next four records cited by Hasbrouck are sight records from Orient, Long Island, by the veteran observer Roy Latham. These records are also summarized by Cruickshank (5). These are followed by a record of a specimen in the American Museum of Natural History which was collected at Brockport on March 28, 1888. This specimen was apparently unknown to Eaton, who knew of only one western New York record, the Sodus Bay specimen listed below.

The seventh and fourteenth records in Hasbrouck's list refer to the same specimen, which is in the collection of the Long Island Historical Society, and bears no data other than "Long Island" (see Cruickshank). The tenth record on the list also refers to this specimen, although here Hasbrouck quotes the record from Eaton, and gratuitously adds the date "Nov. 1904", which properly belongs to the Sodus Bay specimen.

The records for Green Island, Albany Co. (January 21, 1887) and Sodus Bay (November, 1904) are taken directly from Eaton, who also published a photograph of the latter specimen.

Next on Hasbrouck's list is a specimen in the U. S. National Museum taken on the St. Lawrence River "about 1898". Following this is a specimen from the Niagara River, taken February 22, 1899, and now in the Museum of Comparative Zoology. This specimen was apparently known neither to Eaton nor to R. W. Sheppard, who omitted the species entirely from his list of water birds of the Niagara (6).

The next entry refers to a specimen from "Burkport", Nov. 23, 1911, and credited to Harold D. Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell informs me that this specimen was taken by George Guelf at Sandy Creek, north of *Brockport*, New York. It was a young male, and is now in the collection of the Buffalo Museum of Science.

At the place cited by Hasbrouck for his fifteenth entry, Cruickshank states, "There are also sight records from Montauk, February 1, 1937 (Pangburn), and January 23, 1939 (Helmuth)." Hasbrouck transformed the "s" of "sight" into an "e", and listed *eight* records from Montauk, *between* the two dates cited.

The next two records, the sixteenth and seventeenth on the list, are from Raritan Bay, which is in New Jersey, not New York. Incidentally, one of these records is listed as Jan. 5, 1915; the proper date according to Cruickshank is Jan. 5, 1936.

Two sight records close Hasbrouck's list; one from Smithtown, Long Island, March 18-25, 1940, and one from Long Pond, Monroe Co., March 11, 1934.

Thus, of Hasbrouck's nineteen entries for Barrow's Goldeneye in New

York, we have remaining seven sight records (one of which actually represents two separate records) and eight records of birds collected, two of the latter having incomplete or inconclusive data.

Another error in the literature remains to be corrected. Reed and Wright (7) listed a specimen of this species as having been taken at Cayuga by L. A. Fuertes on December 20, 1906. Identification of this specimen has been questioned in recent years. At the 1947 meeting of the A. O. U. at Toronto, the late Dr. Max M. Peet demonstrated that it was possible to identify questionable Goldeneye specimens by means of X-ray photographs of the skull. I submitted the Cayuga specimen to Dr. Peet, who identified it conclusively as an adult female American Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula americana*). The deletion of this record does not remove this species from the list of birds of the Cayuga Lake Basin, however, as there are two sight records from the west shore of Cayuga Lake, one by Dr. A. A. Allen about 1925 or 1926 (exact date lost) and one by Mr. and Mrs. York on March 23, 1946.

The only other recent record of Barrow's Goldeneye in New York away from Long Island which has come to my attention is that published by Rosa and Turrentine (8). The birds were seen on February 18, 1951, but the locality is given merely as "Hudson River", presumably somewhere in the Albany-Troy region.

Cruickshank predicted in 1942 that "further investigation may well reveal that the species occurs annually at the extreme eastern end of Long Island." His expectations have been fulfilled and today the only portion of New York where the observer is justified in a reasonable hope of finding Barrow's Goldeneye is along the rocky fingers of Orient and Montauk Points which reach into the Atlantic. January through March seems to be the most favorable period to look for the species here. Elsewhere in the state it is purely accidental, and sight records must be accepted only after careful study. The most likely region for occasional occurrences of the species seems to be Lake Ontario and vicinity, from the Niagara River to the St. Lawrence River, but even in this area, observers must hope rather than expect to see the bird.

LITERATURE CITED

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