

RECENT HISTORY OF THE BARROW'S GOLDENEYE IN NEW YORK

JOHN J. ELLIOTT

Three important treatises on the Barrow's Goldeneye (*Glaucionetta islandica*) are to be found in the literature of the past 20 years. Erwin M. Hasbrouck (1944) made a rather extensive summarization of the known records of this species east of Duluth, Minnesota. The late Ludlow Griscom (1945) while giving credit to Hasbrouck for publishing a good listing of records for Rhode Island reevaluated that portion of his paper dealing with Massachusetts, as did Kenneth C. Parkes (1951) for New York State.

Previous to 1944, Elon H. Eaton (1910) accumulated many of the records for New York State and Allan D. Cruickshank (1942) supplied most of the Long Island listings for both Parkes and Hasbrouck. Since Parkes' review of New York State in 1951, Thomas A. Lesperance (1955) dealt locally with the Lake Champlain area and brought the records of The Kingbird up to the year 1954 from Parkes' 1951 listing. Other New York State records since are to be found principally spread through the field notes and the regional reports of the Kingbird.

The shooting of an adult drake Barrow's Goldeneye on Great South Bay off Oakdale, Long Island, December 6, 1959, was most unusual as this species is generally only an irregularly reported winter visitor in the Marine Region on the eastern Long Island forks of Orient and Montauk. It was shot by John Strong of Sayville from a blind situated on the bay edge of the La Salle Military Academy grounds a short distance east of Heckscher State Park. As a record it would have gone unreported, except that the mounted specimen was found by Cornelius Ward, of Roosevelt, in the taxidermy studio of James Hagenmayer of Albertson, who later kindly permitted Ward and this writer to examine both this splendid specimen and one of a Common Goldeneye (*Glaucionetta americana*). Ward's discovery of the Oakdale bird, and several subsequent interesting records of sight identification produced an incentive to write this paper dealing with the Barrow's Goldeneye as to habits, identification, status on the northeastern seaboard with general remarks on changing populations, the tabulating of all known Long Island records and bringing those of The Kingbird up to date for New York State.

Habits

On Long Island the Barrow's Goldeneye is a habitue of salt water in practically all instances. John Bull of Far Rockaway, in supplying me with a couple of old records, however, states that Dr. Helmuth of East Hampton recorded it once from Georgica Pond (near the ocean), presumably taking shelter from severe southeastern gales.

According to observers, it does not mix with the Common Goldeneyes to any degree. Such was the case with Strong's bird as he writes: "It was alone although other Goldeneyes were in the area". He said that it appeared rather tame, and both he and Roy Latham, of Orient, claim that it resembles the Bufflehead in its behavior. Strong remarked about its rather bewildering actions, for after he fired one shot, the bird, instead of flying off, came directly toward him as he sat in his blind on the shore and was about to fly over his head when he killed it.

An adult male Barrow's Goldeneye, seen by this writer on February 22, 1961, was also well separated from 40 to 50 Common Goldeneyes on Gardiner's Bay. It did considerable diving, repeatedly surfacing for several seconds, but after five or six such dives it would spend a short interval afloat offering an opportunity for better observation; then diving would be resumed.

Roy Latham, of Orient, who has spent much time in winter around Gardiner's Bay since the early 1900's, writes that, in this location, the only area in Region 10 where more than one Barrow's are likely to be found at a time, he has seen what he presumed were Barrow's Goldeneye females because of their close association in small groups with one or more adult males away from Common Goldeneyes. This also seems to be the criterion for acceptance of Barrow's females by the late Griscom and others in Massachusetts waters where this northerly species is more frequently found and where one to several accompanying females may be involved.

Field Identification

The head of the Barrow's Goldeneye in Hagenmeyer's studio showed a rich, dark, purplish black from every angle; the head of the Common Goldeneye was greenish when viewed at various angles as the bird faced the observer, but Ward and I were surprised to find a purplish tinge if the Common Goldeneye's head was viewed at an angle from the rear, at which point it was noticed that the greenish glint, or sheen, did not show. The dark of the head also appeared to extend further down the neck of the Barrow's, although this is perhaps not diagnostic. The perpendicular rise of the forehead behind the shorter bill of the drake Barrow's offered a low, long and evenly rounded crown when compared to the longer bill and sub-triangular crown of the Common Goldeneye. The much darker-sided Barrow's with its row of white on the jet-black wing is an aid to single out this species from the Common which has a great deal of white on the sides. If seen at close enough range the much longer, white crescent of the Barrow's appears well above the eye and across the base of the bill to about an equal distance below the eye. The round spot of the Common Goldeneye approaches, or is slightly below, a horizontal line from eye to bill.

Griscom warns observers of haphazard and over-simplified identifications of the adult male in the field. He has often refused November and April records, especially from inland fresh water areas, claiming that the male Common Goldeneye occurs annually in November and December and again in April in an eclipse or transitional plumage. This has a row of white spots on a dark wing. This dark wing may be confusing to the inexperienced or careless observer who may not notice that it is dingy gray instead of the diagnostic jet-black always present in the male Barrow's wings and sides. In such changing birds he warns that he has even seen Common Goldeneyes with the round white head spot coming in, making it appear crescent-shaped. Such a bird with incoming round spot was present in a flock of wintering ducks in March, 1961, on the Great South Bay at Babylon. It, however, was seen at close range and was readily identified as a Common Goldeneye.

As for females, in breeding season the Barrow's has an all yellow bill, the Common's yellow-tipped, a field note not much good in our region. Roger T. Peterson, (1947) says that "in winter it is not safe to tell females except by the males they are with". He mentions, however, the bill is "shorter and deeper; forehead is more abrupt". Griscom (op cit) states

that out of six Massachusetts areas harboring Barrow's, five were entirely unsuited because of distance for recognizing females. He claims that under normal circumstances there was no use in speculating on females or immatures, but acknowledges that at very close range the females accompanying the male Barrow's differs from the adjacent female Common Goldeneye "in just those respects which are well known to constitute the external specific characters of minor importance between the two species", without describing those characteristics.

Under such reasoning, coming in during the past winter, we have two brown-plumaged birds recorded in our New York State records in The Kingbird — an immature male at Atlantic Beach, L. I., February 11, and a female at Pulneyville, N. Y., March 12, both seen at close range in comparison with Common Goldeneyes by veteran observers who feel that their identity is correct.

Frank M. Chapman (1934) offers an aid to tell the dead female goldeneyes apart: look for the nostril in the middle of the bill of the Barrow's, and nearer the tip than the base in the Common Goldeneye.

Status

The occurrences of the Barrow's Goldeneye have interested all those who have written about it, yet we are partly in the dark regarding the true status of this duck. Lesperance, in his northeastern New York records remarks "I believe that many Barrow's are shot by hunters along Lake Champlain, but . . . a lack of interest and knowledge prevents these occurrences from coming to light". This, also, may be applicable to many other well-hunted areas in the state.

Lesperance's records come from Ausable Point on Lake Champlain where he writes of a single male Barrow's seen several days in late March, 1953, and two males and a female, November 10, 1954 (Male and female collected). He also remarks: "future records may establish some yearly continuity of occurrence for this species in the Lake Champlain area".

James K. Merritt (Kingbird, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 46) writes of a second area in Region 8 for the regular occurrences of the Barrow's: "This marks the third winter in the last four that the Barrow's Goldeneye has been seen along the Hudson above Albany. I would doubt that there is any other spot in the state that could boast of such regularity". With no record for 1960, but occurring again in 1961 the score now is four out of six years for Merritt's Hudson River area. A third area of recent production is the Niagara River area where the bird was seen in both 1959 and 1960, and a hybrid between Barrow's and Common was picked up dead in 1956. Perhaps the largest flock reported in recent years (1960) were two males and two females (male and two females shot) at Stony Point, Lake Ontario.

As for Long Island, the last few years has shown an increase which might include it as a fourth area to find a few widespread Barrow's Goldeneyes, with records not confined to eastern Montauk and Orient. Cruickshank (1942) says that on Long Island a scarcity of local records indicates that the species belongs with our list of very accidental winter visitants, but after giving these records, remarks: ". . . further investigation may well reveal that the species occurs annually at the extreme eastern end of Long Island".

Parkes echoes this, quoting the above, with "my 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 out into the Atlantic".

Aside from an increase of reports since 1959, a search of our long Island records and inquiry by letter shows no great confidence by our veteran observers of seeing it; for reports show long intervals of absence with sporadic appearances. It would appear that Orient State Park is the most likely place to find it, yet Roy Latham of Orient, reporting from there had but one observance since 1926 (1959), an absence of 33 years: Yet this is the one Long Island area which is the most productive as to flocking individuals with one report of nine — six males and three females — in a single group many years ago.

Griscom in 1945 wrote of four formerly good Barrow's Goldeneye locations north of Boston, two remaining: Lynn (none since 1934); Beverly for eight years until 1942; two areas are still productive — Newburyport Harbor and St. Ann (Gloucester and Rockport). Griscom also relates that he, with John T. Nichols, in 1925 went up into Massachusetts waters to see for "the first time the Barrow's Goldeneye alive". The reason for forsaking Long Island waters is that evidently they were pretty sure of their success northward. Long Island has not developed into such an area so far as to produce with certainty; and we still have our midwinter observers who after visiting Massachusetts's rocky capes generally report success upon their return.

Records

Because additional changes and corrections are necessary to clarify some old reports, all known Long Island records will be reviewed. Apparently those records for the rest of the state have been more carefully screened and recently compiled by Parkes through the year 1951 and Lesperance to 1955, so these will be brought up to date — 1956 to 1961.

Long Island: Only one specimen in our collections — a female, many years ago; see Dutcher, *Auk*, 10: p 270, 1893. This bird was reported by both Cruickshank and Hasbrouck as being in the collection of the Long Island Historical Society. It is now in the American Museum of Natural History, N. Y. C. The next oldest but rather indefinite record, and one hitherto unpublished, is that of a Barrow's male shot on Gardiner's Bay by an unknown hunter "back around 1900" (Roy Latham). The next four sight records also come from Latham, all from Gardiner's Bay at Orient. Cruickshank mentions these birds collectively, without numbers or sex; Hasbrouck lists numbers only. These are six males and three females, January 5, 1909; one male, February 16, 1918, and three — one male and two females, March 3, 1918; one male, February 11, 1926. Cruickshank, like Griscom, remarking on the rather similar plumages between males of Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes claims that "many sight records by inexperienced observers of the rarer bird are not worth much consideration". He, therefore, gives but two Long Island records besides Latham's, both at Montauk: February 1, 1937 (Pangborn) and January 23, 1939 (Helmuth).

Next is a record by Hasbrouck of a male from Smithtown, seen March 18 and 25, 1940, reported by "J. J. Elliott". Actually this bird should be credited to Richard B. Fischer of Flushing, now a professor at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

Chronologically, the next two records (furnished by John Bull of Far Rockaway) are one at Montauk, March 15, 1945, and one on Georgica Pond, East Hampton, December 31, 1948, both records by Helmuth. Interspersed between these two dates was a drake seen on Lower Carman's River, South Haven, April 3, 1947 (D. Puleston) previously unreported. Apparently there was a fairly heavy infiltration in the banner year of 1959, which produced three Long Island records with five individuals and, incidentally, one each in region 1 and Region 7 in the rest of the state.

Long Island's 1959 records are: a male, Shinnecock Bay, January 10 (Dan Schaeffer); three —one male, two females, February 17 and February 19 at Orient (Latham) both unpublished records, and a male shot December 6 at Oakdale (Kingbird, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 43). Two 1961 records conclude the Long Island list: a male, Gardiner's Bay at Orient, February 22 (Elliott); Atlantic Beach, an identified immature male seen under extraordinarily good circumstances, (Mayer, Rose, et. al.) (Kingbird, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 70).

New York State, except Long Island: In 1956 James Meritt reported in Region 7, a male Barrow's seen four miles south of Mechanicsville on the Hudson, January 21 through February 4 (K. Hart, Schenectady Bird Club) (first seen by the club since 1952). Two records in 1957: again, one by Meritt on the Hudson, a few miles above Albany, January 13-19 (Schenectady Bird Club) (Kingbird, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 30). The second was a hybrid between a Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, found dead, Niagara Gorge, in March (Muma, reported by Baillie) found in Clark S. Beardslee's Region 1 (Kingbird, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 16). There was one record for 1958, a Barrow's seen at Pt. Byron, Region 3 by a Mr. Dewey in early January, reported by Mrs. S. Hoyt, regional director (Kingbird, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 15). Again in 1959 for the third year out of four, Merritt reported a male Barrow's on January 18 on the Hudson river above Albany (Kingbird, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 46). Andrie, Coggeshall and Axtell also found a male Barrow's at Niagara Falls, January 3, 1959 (Kingbird, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 29). The following year two records came in: a male on the west branch of the Niagara River, January 1, 1960 (Dr. Axtell), last seen February 21 (H. Mitchell) (Kingbird, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 18, 19); Stony Point, Lake Ontario, November 27, two males and two females, all but one male shot, from Field Notes, "Barrow's Goldeneye in Jefferson County" Frank A. Clinch (Kingbird, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 166).

Three 1961 records conclude those of New York State to date: A female, closely observed and compared, Pultneyville, Region 2, March 12 (Foster, Miller) (Kingbird, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 45); one above Troy on Hudson River, February 2 (Austin) (Kingbird, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 65); one male and a probable female, Fischer's Bay, Oneida Lake, March 31 to April 5 (D. Peakall, J. Bart, F. Scheider), Field Notes, "Barrow's Goldeneye on Oneida Lake" (Kingbird, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 34, 35).

Literature Cited

- Chapman, Frank M. 1934. Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America, D. Appleton — Century Co., N. Y., p. 201.
Cruickshank, Allan D. 1942. Birds Around New York City, Amer. Mus. of Nat. Hist., Handbook Ser. no. 13, p. 112.
Eaton, Elon H. 1910. Birds of New York, Part I, State Education Department. Memoir 12, p. 211.

- Griscom, Ludlow. 1945. Barrow's Goldeneye in Massachusetts. *Auk*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 401-405.
- Hasbrouck, Edwin M. 1944. The Status of Barrow's Goldeneye in the Eastern United States, *Auk*, vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 544-554.
- Lesperance, Thomas A. 1955. Barrow's Goldeneye at Ausable Point, Lake Champlain. *Kingbird*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 39, 40.
- Parkes, Kenneth C. 1951. The Barrow's Goldeneye in New York, *Kingbird*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 54-56.
- Peterson, Roger T. 1947. *A Field Guide to the Birds*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, p. 47.

W. O. S.

The Audubon Society of Canada, The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, and The Royal Ontario Museum sponsored the forty-second annual meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society on the weekend of June 8-11, 1961.

As a meeting place they chose the Hotel Britannia at Huntsville, Ontario with ideal hotel accommodations and convenient meeting places joined under one unit.

A northern lake at the hotel site and the whole expanse of Algonquin Park within convenient driving distance, gave the members excellent opportunities for field observations. At the paper sessions, participants covered bird songs, migration, bird behavior and other related topics. They all combined to make a very balanced program.

Three members of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. gave papers at the meeting. Dr. Walter R. Spofford talked about and showed slides of "White Epauettes in some Appalachian Golden Eagles". Fred T. Hall of the Buffalo Museum of Science, showed a color film entitled "Birds of the Border", and Dr. Lawrence I. Grinnell of Ithaca gave an account of his visit to the South Pacific with a talk and color film under the title of "Australia Outback".

On the night field trips, the members experienced the thrill of hearing calling Loons and a few fortunate individuals heard wild wolves call as they responded to sound reproductions.

On Friday evening, Roger Tory Peterson, very informally, presented the color films of his recent African trip. These pictures were taken just before the start of the troubles which now beset that country.

Again, on Saturday night at the annual dinner, Roger Peterson gave a talk entitled "A Gathering of the Storks". — Edward C. Ulrich

1962 FEDERATION WATERFOWL COUNT

The date of the federation waterfowl count will cover the two weekends Mr. Leonard McWilliams was elected President of an Association member—Leo Tanghe and will compile the records for the 1962 count. Write to him at 345 Concord Drive, Rochester 16, for information.

WINTER EAGLE COUNT

The Research Division of the National Audubon Society has chosen the same general time, January 5 to 15, for an eagle count and through Dr. Walter P. Spofford have asked our help. For forms to use on this count write to Research Division, Audubon Society, Tavernier, Fla.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NEW YORK STATE ORNITHOLOGY 1910-1952

ALLEN H. BENTON AND STEPHEN W. EATON

The bibliographic committee now has available an author list of titles on New York State Ornithology 1910-1952. This was assembled to help people interested in New York's birds and to fill a gap existing between E. H. Eaton's *Birds of New York* and the yearly bibliographies in the *KINGBIRD* started in 1953.