

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Early Egg Dates for Common Goldeneye in New York State – In 1981 Gordon Meade prepared a tabular summary of the breeding season for all those species known to nest in New York State. He said "in some species good data is almost totally lacking." He goes on to say "there is an opportunity for Atlas workers to secure information to fill in the gaps." The Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) is one of those species for which "little is known about its nesting habits in the state" (Bull 1974).

From my five years experience working on the Atlas I believe Lake Champlain along the shore of Clinton County to be one of the primary breeding areas for this species in the state. Where suitable habitat exists along Lake Champlain, the Common Goldeneye is a fairly common breeder. In Vermont, at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, which is directly opposite Clinton County across Lake Champlain, the Common Goldeneye is the most numerous species of duck using the waterfowl boxes.

Bull (1974) cites Lake Alice in Clinton County as the northernmost known breeding record in the state. On 4 July I observed a female Common Goldeneye with 8-10 downy young at a location north of the ruins of old Fort Montgomery, within one-quarter of a mile of the U.S.-Canada border. This is about 10 miles north of Lake Alice.

For the last three years I have maintained a small (12 boxes) waterfowl nest box project along Lake Champlain in northern Clinton County. On 28 April of this year while checking the boxes along the Little Chazy River within about one mile of Lake Champlain, I found two boxes occupied by Common Goldeneyes. In both boxes a full clutch of about 10 eggs was found. If we assume that one egg was laid per day and that incubation had not yet started, the first egg would have been laid 19 April. This is a very conservative estimate since Bellrose (1976) says that egg laying by Common Goldeneyes is at a lower rate than by most other waterfowl, about 1.36 days per egg. At the other end of the range for dates, the downy young observed on 4 July were either in Class IA or B (Bellrose 1976) or no older than about 13 days. Calculating backwards they would have hatched about 21 June (19 April - 21 June). So therefore a more accurate estimate of egg dates than late May-June suggested by the tabulation of Gordon Meade would be mid April-mid June.

Literature Cited

- Bull, John, 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, NY. pp. 149-151.
Bellrose, Frank C., 1976. *Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*. Stackpole Books, p. 27, 435.

Mark Gretch, P.O. Box 748, Champlain, NY 12919