

155-01-1992

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
(*Bucephala islandica*)

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie Co. PA

Date: I discovered the pair on Feb. 20, 1992 and studied them for the next 8 days.

Viewing conditions: viewed under many weather conditions including bright sunny days.

Viewing time: many hours

Viewing distance: approximately 250 yards to as far away as $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

Optics used: Zeiss Dyalyt 10 X 40 Binocular and a Bushnell Spacemaster Spotting Scope with a 25X eyepiece. Several photographs were taken using a 400 mm lens.

Description of male: Noticeably larger than male Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*). Bill entirely black, shorter, and thinner based than Common Goldeneye. Steep forehead with relatively flat crown gradually angling down and flaring out at the nape. Common Goldeneye has a gradually sloping forehead and peaking near the center of the crown before sloping down the back of the head. The white patch in front of the eye was vertically elongated being widest at the bottom where it was rounded and narrowing to a point at the top. The general shape resembled a tear drop gently curving inward at the bottom. When the sun was shining, the purple sheen on the head could be seen especially above the eye. The entire underside was white. The mantle, wings, and tail were black. A row of roundish white spots was diagnostic markings in the scapulars as opposed to white scapulars with narrow parallel lines in Common Goldeneye. The double white patch in the folded wing, not solid white as in Common Goldeneye, was also distinctive when visible. The most prominent feature was the black bar or "finger" that extended down the sides of the breast in front of the folded wings. This was an identifying characteristic when the bird was at its greatest distance from me. The Barrow's Goldeneye was clearly in alternate definitive plumage.

Description of female: identifying the female as a Barrow's was a challenge and required better lighting conditions than was needed for identifying the male Barrow's. It was impossible to separate from the female Common Goldeneye when viewed at a distance of more than 300 yards away. The female was always in the company of the male and when the female would dive the male would dive immediately afterwards. The male frequently displayed to the female by pumping its head up and down unlike the male Common Goldeneye that throws its head back over its back when displaying. The female often responded by swimming up to the male Barrow's with its head lowered. The overall color of the female Barrow's was almost identical to the female Common Goldeneye. However, when the two species were together the Barrow's showed a darker gray mantle and a cooler or darker brown head than the Common Goldeneye. The head shape was a subtle version of the male Barrow's with a lesser steeped forehead, slightly rounder crown, and less flaring at the nape. The most distinguishing characteristic separating the two species was the shorter thinner based bill especially evident when in direct comparison with the female Common Goldeneye. Only the bill tip was yellow like the female Common Goldeneye which indicates the eastern type. When the Barrow's was seen in flight and when it stretched its wings, the

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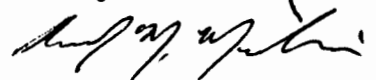
the reduced white in the median coverts could be seen. The reduction of white in the median coverts was more convincing when directly compared to female Common Goldeneye in flight. I don't consider this to be an identifying field characteristic since alternate I Common Goldeneye females are likely to have a smaller amount of white in the median coverts.

On Feb. 26 the pair was joined by another male Barrow's and the three were seen together for at least 5 minutes before the single male broke off from the pair.

I have seen only one other Barrow's Goldeneye and it was a male in alternate definitive plumage at Niagara Falls, Ontario.

The pair was also seen by at least 20 other experienced birders over the period of 9 days.

Jerry McWilliams



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Barrow's Goldeneye**

Date of Sighting: **20 February 1992 to 17 March 1992**

Observer(s): **Jerry McWilliams**

Date of Submission: **1992**

Submitted by: **Jerry McWilliams**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater	X						
B. Haas	X						
F. Haas	X						
R. Ickes	X						
G. McWilliams	X						
S. Santner	X						
J. Skinner	X						
TOTALS	7						
DECISION	X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

2-27-93