

# Rare Bird Report

155-01-2003 by Michael Schall

Barrow's Goldeneye

12-22-03

adult female

location: Delaware River seen from the Portland  
footbridge, Northampton County

Time: mid-afternoon

weather: Partly sunny, light winds

Optics: Leica televid 77 at 60X

Description notes written on 12/22, report re-write  
done in January

other observers: Billy and Judy Weber  
canberra-sky@mac.com

## Barrow's Goldeneye

## Description and comparison

Early afternoon on 1d-22-03, I stopped at the Portland footbridge on the Delaware River to check for waterfowl. I saw my friends Billy and Judy Weber already scanning the river and Billy excitedly said they thought they had found a female Barrow's Goldeneye. The Goldeneye was a good distance up river near the middle and by itself. Another twenty or more Goldeneyes were near the New Jersey side close to shore in a favorite feeding area. A scope was necessary to view the birds that were probably 3 or 400 yards away.

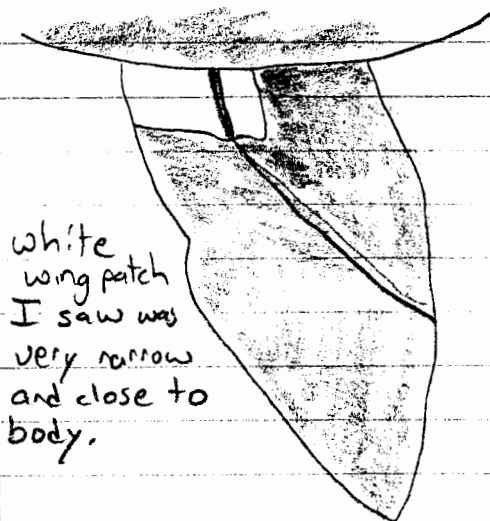
Eventually, it mixed in with the other Goldeneyes and all were continually feeding. Occasionally it would rest and could be studied. The female was an adult bird with a medium to dark gray body and dark brown head with a yellow eye. It looked just slightly smaller than the female Common Goldeneyes. The head was studied most since this is what made us feel it was a Barrow's. The head was rounded with a vertical forehead and a short bill. In comparison, all the other Goldeneyes heads showed a pointy, peaked look or dome-shaped appearance with a much longer bill. The Barrow's bill was yellow on the front  $\frac{2}{3}$ 's and the base section (back  $\frac{1}{3}$ 's) was a pale gray color. The adult female Common Goldeneye's on the river had much longer bills that were black with a small yellow tip.

As it fed, the Barrow's again separated itself from the group. After some time passed, we got to see it fly back out to the middle of the river. This allowed a good look at its wings. The white patches on the secondaries next to the body were very small and narrow. This

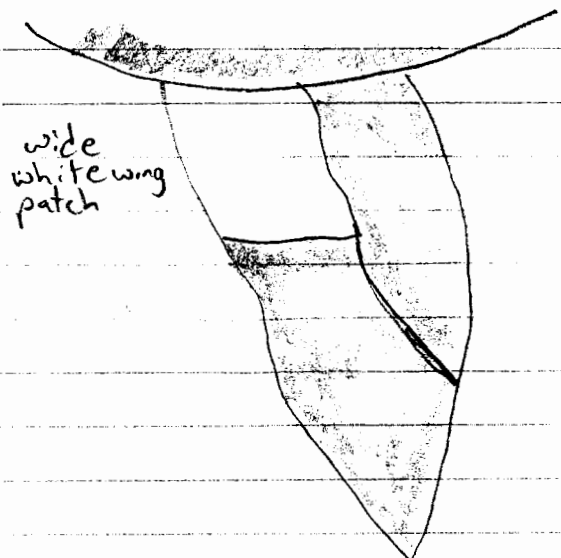
was a convincing indicator for me that it was definitely a Barrow's. The female Common Goldeneye that I saw fly had wider/larger patches.

I've studied my field guides in the past and knew what key features to check for. Last winter, I saw a probable male Barrow's on river below the Belvidere bridge but was not completely certain and chose not to write up a report. There was also a male hybrid seen in that area by many birders. From this past experience, I knew to focus on studying the head shape and bill and wings. One feature in the guides I could not say for sure was the head color. This was hard to tell, the head color looked similar among the birds. After checking all my field guides, there was no doubt that I did indeed see the important characteristics needed to clearly identify this duck as a Barrow's Goldeneye. My comparisons in the above text accurately is reflected in the field guides. I have made sketches of the heads as I saw them on the river to help prove my identification.

Barrow's Goldeneye

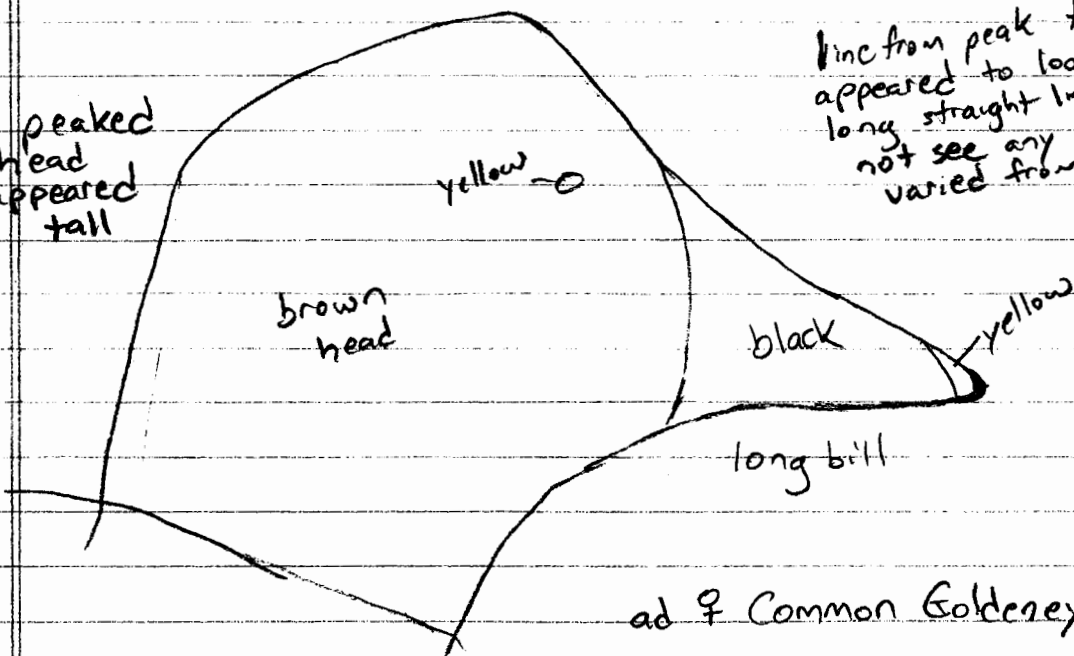


Common Goldeneye



peaked head

peaked head appeared tall

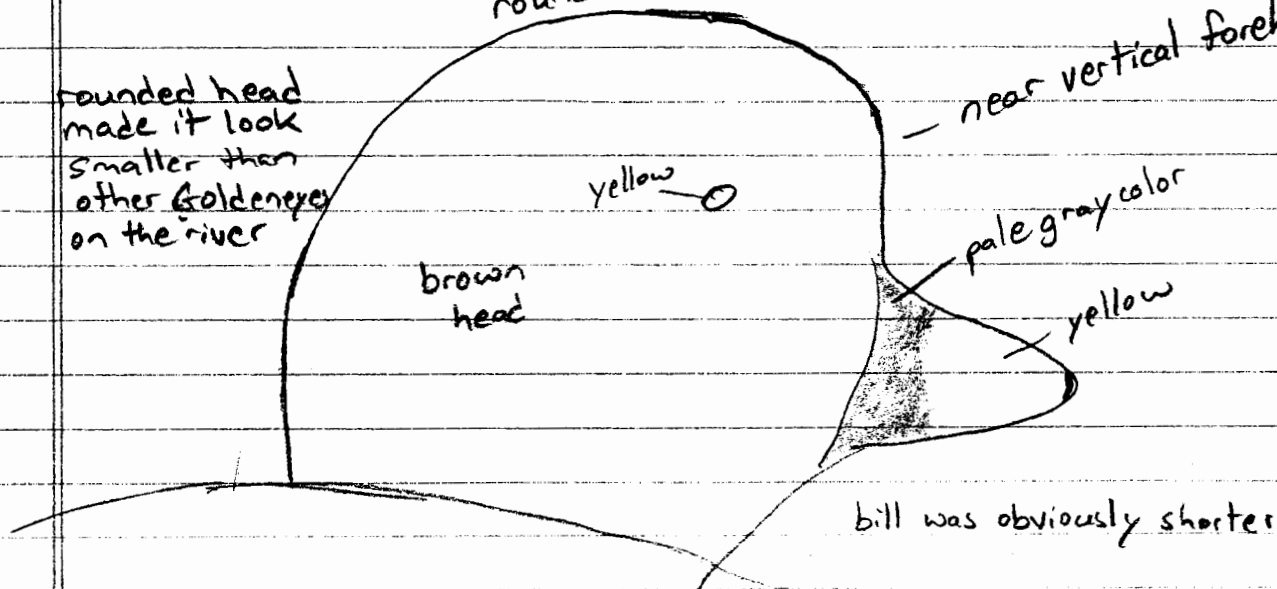


line from peak to bill tip appeared to look like one long straight line. I did not see any Commons that varied from this sketch

ad ♀ Common Goldeneye

round head

rounded head made it look smaller than other Goldeneyes on the river



near vertical forehead

adult ♀ Barrow's Goldeneye

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*)

Date of Sighting: 22 December 2003 to 22 December 2003

Location: DELAWARE RIVER AT PORTLAND FOOT BRIDGE

County : NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Michael Schall, Billy Weber, Judy Weber

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Michael Schall

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No


Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			6	1				
DECISION			X					

Comments: 6/1

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

9/16/04