

New Hampshire

BIRD RECORDS



Crossbills



A fully adult Red Crossbill photographed by David Govatski on the Errol-Umbagog Christmas Bird Count, 12-20-19.

Photo Quiz



Can You Identify These Birds?

Photo by Susan Wrisley.
Answer on page 42.

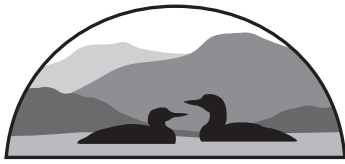


*Male and female
White-winged Crossbills
by Donna Ellis, 2-9-20,
Galehead Hut,
Lincoln, NH.*



A Red Crossbill molting from its immature green plumage into the adult red plumage. You can see its tongue reaching into the slush for a drink. Photo by Steve Mirick, 2-9-20, Albany, NH.

IN APPRECIATION



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This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by Susan and Peter Wrisley in appreciation of all the great people in the New Hampshire birding community. That community is part of Susan's recipe for success during her big year which she writes about in this issue. Please see the accompanying message from Susan on page 2.



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Cover Photos: Painted Bunting (top) by Steve Mirick, 2-9-20, Tin Mountain Conservation Center, Albany, NH. Brambling (bottom) by Scott Young, 12-4-19, Strafford, NH.

Answer to the Photo Quiz

by Susan Wrisley

Photos by Susan Wrisley unless otherwise noted.



See the Inside Front Cover for a color version of this photo.

Under the best of circumstances, birds that look similar can be difficult to tell apart, but in this photo the sleeping ducks and lack of sun have conspired to hide their most commonly known field marks. Fear not, they are still showing distinctive differences that make identification fairly straightforward, but first let's make sure we're all on the same page of our field guides.

We have three small, compact, diving ducks with bold black and white coloring and brilliant yellow-gold eyes. This information alone is probably enough to lead any birder to the conclusion that they are male (drake) goldeneyes. Yes! Congratulations, you did it! But wait, did you really think it was going to be that simple? No, of course not, because there are two types of goldeneyes that regularly overwinter in New Hampshire; Common and Barrow's. The two in front are obviously the same, and the one in back is different, but which is which?

Like so many new birders, when I started birding, I was taught that the easiest way to tell the difference between a Common Goldeneye and a Barrow's Goldeneye was the color of the iridescence on their head and the shape of the white mark between their bill and eye. Commons have a green iridescence on their head and an oval white spot, while Barrow's have a purple-blue iridescence and a crescent shaped white mark, which extends above the height of their eye. This was great information until I realized that some lighting conditions can cause Commons to have a blue sheen and it was often difficult to see if a duck had an oval or crescent when they were far away. This meant it was necessary to learn other field marks, since gray winter days often obliterate color, and ducks are almost always far away, except for Mallards. Fortunately, these attractive ducks have several other telltale field marks beyond the face mark and the color

of their heads.

Let's compare the overall shape of the head, forehead and bill of both ducks. The Common Goldeneye has a peaked crown, with a sloping forehead that leads to a black triangular shaped bill which is noticeably longer than the lore (the space between the bill and eye). The Barrow's Goldeneye has a more rounded head and a sloping crown, with a steep forehead that meets the short triangular shaped bill at an angle, making it appear even stubbier than it actually is. The Barrow's bill is about the same length as the lore. The head, forehead and bill shape for each species carries over to the females (hens) and immatures, which may be the only reliable way to tell them apart since they have little in the way of plumage/coloring cues to go by. Keep in mind, however, that the angle of the duck's head can make the forehead and bill appear differently, so take time to observe carefully if you are unsure.



Common Goldeneye (top),
Barrow's Goldeneye (bottom).



Common Goldeneye (top),
Barrow's Goldeneye (bottom).

Moving down to the body of our ducks, we now get to what I think are the best field marks for male goldeneyes. As you can see in the photo to the left, the scapulars of the two ducks look very different. Scapulars are body feathers that cover the wing when the bird is resting. The Common Goldeneye (top) has mostly white scapulars, with thin black stripes, while the Barrow's (bottom) has mostly black scapulars with white dots. The Barrow's also has a black "spur" on its shoulder that points down toward the water while the Common lacks this mark. These field marks show well on sleeping ducks, at a distance, in poor light and even in black and white photos! With this information, one can now see that the quiz photo shows two male Barrow's (front and right) and one Common (upper left).

Trick Question

Now that we worked all that out, what quiz would be complete without a trick question, covering something not fully discussed in class? Using the information provided, can you tell if this female (next page, top left) is a Common or Barrow's Goldeneye? The answer is at the end.



Trick question photo by Cathy Wennerth, 1-11-19, Manchester, NH.

When to Find Them

Common Goldeneyes typically begin arriving in New Hampshire by mid October, with their heaviest numbers occurring between December and March. They can still be found in April, but in smaller numbers.

Barrow's Goldeneyes start to appear in mid to late November and are present through April, with the largest number of reports in January and February. It's likely that the increase in reports represents birders checking off a nice year-bird, rather than an actual increase in their numbers.

Where to Find Them

As their name implies, Common Goldeneyes are fairly common in New Hampshire during the winter months and can sometimes be seen by the hundreds in places such as

Great Bay. Look for them along the coast, in bays, harbors and rivers. Inland, look for them in larger rivers, near the base of dams where water tends to stay open, and in any body of open water.

Although fairly uncommon in New Hampshire, Barrow's Goldeneyes are still regular winter visitors and can be found wherever Common Goldeneyes occur. Single Barrow's or pairs are sometimes mixed in with flocks of Commons, so always take a moment to scan for the odd duck.

Barrow's Goldeneye Locations

- Stark Landing, Manchester, NH – Located behind Delta Dental Stadium, this small road leads to a steep boat ramp. A scope is helpful. Be diligent of your personal safety and use care during icy conditions.
- Waumbec Mills (weekends recommended), Manchester, NH – Located at 250 Commercial Street, about half a mile north of Stark Landing. The parking lots behind the old mill buildings allow for good views of the Merrimack River. Note: **All** parking spaces behind the mills are assigned to building tenants. This congested area is very busy during the week.
- Arms Park, Manchester, NH – Less than a quarter mile from Waumbec Mills. This area is also busy during weekdays, however, there is a large parking lot and usually ample room but there is a fee for parking.

- Great Bay Discovery Center, Greenland NH – there is a small public boat ramp next to the Discovery Center from which you can view Great Bay. Morning is best for light and a scope is essential.
- Bracket Point, Greenland, NH – This small parcel of wildlife management land is located off Osprey Cove (road), roughly next to 16 Osprey Cove. Look for a small parking area, next to an old cemetery. From there a rough path leads into a field, then goes to the left, into a second field, then into the forest and out to Bracket Point. The path can be difficult to follow. A scope is essential.

Trick Question Answer:
Common Goldeneye

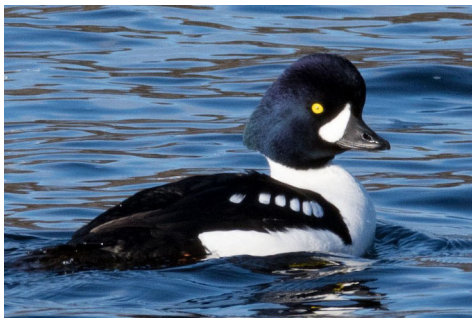


Photo by Leo McKillop, 1-15-17, Manchester, NH.

Barrow's Goldeneye

- More rounded head, sloping crown
- Purple-blue iridescence on head
- Steep forehead
- White crescent between bill and eye, extends above eye
- Bill is about the length of the lores
- Black scapulars with white spots
- Black spur on shoulder



Photo by Susan Wisley, 1-22-20, Hampton, NH.

Common Goldeneye

- Peaked crown
- Green iridescence on head
- Sloping forehead
- White oval spot between bill and eye, does not extend above eye
- Bill longer than lores
- Mostly white scapulars with thin black stripes
- No spur on shoulder

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Abbreviations Used

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------|
| AMC | Appalachian Mountain Club |
| BBC | Brookline Bird Club |
| BBS | Breeding Bird Survey |
| CA | Conservation Area |
| CC | Country Club |
| CFT | NH Audubon Chapter Field Trip |
| FT | Field Trip |
| IBA | Important Bird Area |
| L. | Lake |
| LPC | Loon Preservation Committee |
| NA | Natural Area |
| NHA | New Hampshire Audubon |
| NHBR | New Hampshire Bird Records |
| NHRBC | NH Rare Birds Committee |
| NWR | National Wildlife Refuge |
| PO | Post Office |
| R. | River |
| Rd. | Road |
| RO | Raptor Observatory |
| Rt. | Route |
| SF | State Forest |
| SP | State Park |
| SPNHF | Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Concord |
| T&M | Thompson & Meserves (Purchase) |
| TNC | The Nature Conservancy |
| WMA | Wildlife Management Area |
| WMNF | White Mountain National Forest |
| WS | NHA Wildlife Sanctuary |
| ~ | approximately |
| WTP | Wastewater Treatment Plant |

New Hampshire Bird Records is published quarterly by NH Audubon's Conservation Department. Thank you to the many observers who submit their sightings to NH eBird (www.ebird.org/nh), the source of data for this publication. The published sightings typically represent the highlights of the season. Not all species reported will appear in the issue. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication here does not imply future acceptance by the RBC.

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Winter 2019-2020 Rarities



Green-tailed Towhee by Jim Sparrell, 12-8-19, Chichester, NH.



Read about this Yellow-breasted Chat that spent part of the winter in Portsmouth at Katie Towler and Jim Sparrell's feeders. Photo by Jim Sparrell, 1-9-20.



The New Castle Bullock's Oriole by Steve Mirick, 1-1-20, NH.



The Stratham Bullock's Oriole by Terri Fratus, 2-22-20, NH. We were sorry to learn that Terri passed away in July 2020.



The Plaistow Western Tanager by Susan Whisley, 12-7-19, NH.



The North Hampton Western Tanager by Len Medlock, 12-28-19, NH.