

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE IN SASKATCHEWAN

CHRISTOPHER J. ESCOTT, 271 Silvan Way, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 5G1

On Monday 10 October 1983 I visited the south end of Blackstrap Lake south of Saskatoon to see if any new water birds were on the lake. A cold front had blown in from the northwest overnight and it was cool with short driving showers which continued to blow through.

About 450 m north along the east bank a small flock of goldeneye moved away from the shore. Two of the birds were adult males and the other five were females or immatures. The upperparts of one of the males were markedly darker than those of the other. Study with a spotting scope confirmed that this male and at least one of the females were Barrow's Goldeneye.

The male was in full adult plumage with the inverted white facial comma, the extensive black upperparts with white port-holes, the black of the back drooping down over the shoulder in a crescent shape, and the rather flat-headed profile. The drake seemed alarmed as it began craning its neck and swimming farther out into the lake. The female was very similar to the nearby female Common Goldeneye except that the bill was entirely yellow-orange in colour.

I took a hasty photograph of the drake, and almost immediately the flock spooked and flew to the north several hundred meters. I called in a report on the Saskatoon Rare Bird Alert and about an hour later was joined at Blackstrap by Al Smith and Stan Shadick who also saw these goldeneye. We were, however unable to approach the birds any closer than about 150-200 m before they became agitated and flew away again.

The birds were not seen again for about 3 weeks, but in the last few days of October and the first week of November there were several reports of up to three Barrow's Goldeneye at Blackstrap as well as reports of single drakes on Last Mountain Lake at Regina Beach 28 and 30 October by B. Luterbach and R. Kreba, and Broderick Reservoir near Outlook on 8-9 November by A.R. Smith. Another 2 weeks passed before my final sighting at Blackstrap Lake. On 18 November 1983 Al Smith and I were on the west side of the lake in the Shields Townsite when we found three Barrow's Goldeneye feeding in the shallows: a drake, a yellow-billed female and a dark-billed bird I assumed to be an immature Barrow's Goldeneye. I photographed the male again, but as soon as they were approached the three birds flew off and were not seen again. Five days later the lake was completely frozen over.

The photographs provide documentation of this species' occurrence in Saskatchewan. The recently revised provincial checklist showed Barrow's Goldeneye as a hypothetical species, known from sight records but never photographed or collected. Houston summarized the unconfirmed records to 1 January 1981 and there were four: an adult male 6 April at Morse, an adult male shot but not preserved at Pasqua Lake 12 October 1964, a male 9 November 1975 north of Semans, and a male at Eastend 5-6 April 1980.² Two subsequent sightings have been reported: 25 October 1981 Bob Godwin, Kathy Meeres and D. Paulson saw an adult male at Blackstrap and 24 October 1982 Bob Luterbach reported a male at Regina Beach.^{4 1}



Male Barrow's Goldeneye

Christopher Esco

In Canada Barrow's Goldeneye commonly breeds throughout the Rocky Mountains as well as in Labrador. It winters along both coasts, but is also recorded widely but sporadically in the interior of the country during migration. The limited number of sightings to date in Saskatchewan may be partly due to limited birding activity in the province at the appropriate time of year. The intensive duck-watching during the fall of 1983, especially at Blackstrap Lake may have only recorded what may be an uncommon but regular migrant.

¹HARRIS, W.C. 1983. Prairie Provinces Region, the autumn migration August 1 - November 30, 1982. *Am. Birds* 37(2): 192-194.

²HOUSTON, C.S., M.I. HOUSTON and J.B. GOLLOP. 1981. Saskatchewan bird species — hypothetical and rejected. *Blue Jay* 39(4):196-201.

³KREBA, R. 1983. Field checklist of Saskatchewan birds, sixth edition, June 1983. Museum of Nat. Hist., Sask. Culture & Recreation.

⁴O'NEIL, P. 1981. Saskatoon Field Notes #39 (Vol. 10, No. 3) August 1 - November 30, 1981. Saskatoon Nat. Hist. Soc

WANTED: SIGHTINGS OF PEREGRINE FALCONS IN SASKATCHEWAN. Ad peregrine falcons were seen on the south Saskatchewan River system at a potential nesting area this spring. Substantial numbers of peregrines have been released in both the city of Saskatoon and the Ou'Appelle Valley and we feel this sighting may indicate that a few breeding pairs of peregrines have established themselves. Please report exact location of a sighting to: L.W. Oliphant, Department of Vet. Anatomy, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 0W0.