

Wildlife Fact Sheet

Barrow's Goldeneye

In the Upper Klamath Basin — Oregon and California



Quick identification keys and range:

Keys to identifying the two goldeneye species are 1) the male Barrow's has a crescent shaped white patch on the head while the Common has a round or oval marking and 2) Female Barrow's Goldeneye have an entirely yellow to pinkish bill in the winter while the Common Goldeneye female has a mostly black bill with a yellow tip.

Barrow's Goldeneyes have a North American distribution ranging from northern California through southern Alaska on the Pacific coast and a much smaller distribution along the Atlantic coast from New England to Hudson Bay. They are sometimes found as far inland as Utah and Michigan. On the Pacific coast they winter primarily on salt water estuaries and bays from Puget Sound north to Kodiak Island in southern Alaska. In the Pacific Northwest, smaller numbers of Barrow's Goldeneye may congregate in substantial numbers on lakes and rivers including the Link River near Klamath Falls, Oregon during the winter months.

Where and when to see Barrow's Goldeneye in the Klamath Basin

This species is most commonly seen from mid-October through late March along the Link River Trail (KBBT site 30), Putnam's Point (KBBT site 29) and the at the north end of Lake Ewauna (KBBT site 31) at the south end of the Link River. From mid-November through early March it would not be unusual to observe well over 150 Barrow's Goldeneye in these locations along with similar numbers of Common Goldeneye, Common Mergansers and Hooded Mergansers. During the summer nesting season this species is seldom seen in the Klamath Basin except in high elevation lakes including Diamond Lake which is just north of Crater Lake at the north edge of the Upper Klamath Basin watershed. Other sites where this species is likely to be observed in the fall and winter include Howard Bay on Upper Klamath Lake (KBBT site 26), Lower Klamath and Tule Lake Refuges (KBBT sites 41 and 42) and Klamath Wildlife Area

Seasonal movements:

Observations of this species in Oregon during the summer and confined mostly to subalpine lakes in the Cascade Mountains where they are known to breed. In the winter they are uncommon in most locations east of the Cascades and rarely seen on the west side and in coastal locations. It is apparently unknown if populations which breed around subalpine lakes in Oregon's central Cascade mountains are those that show up on the Link River and other ice free lakes and rivers in Oregon and northern California during the winter.

Breeding behavior, nesting and brood rearing

Goldeneye pair bonding and courtship behavior may be observed from November through the early spring. Displays include a forward head stretching low to the water and a coordinated display with both males and females tilting their head back in a neck stretching posture. Males will aggressively chase other males away during courtship including male Common Goldeneye if they approach too closely.

Like the Common Goldeneye, this closely related species nests in tree cavities and nesting boxes. They will use tree cavities excavated by Northern Flicker and other woodpeckers. Flickers sometimes "return the favor" as a nest predator consuming eggs. Barrow's Goldeneye have a limited nesting range in Oregon in subalpine lakes in the central Cascade mountains. Most breed to the north on interior freshwater lakes and ponds. This species is known to nest on Diamond Lake just north of the Klamath Basin watershed.

Typically a female lays eggs every other day and starts incubation when the clutch is complete with 8 to 12 eggs being typical. The incubation period is 20 to 30 days with the female doing all of the work and losing up to 30 percent of her body weight during incubation.

Fun Facts

- ⇒ The young of several broods may be tended by a single female shortly after hatching.
- ⇒ Barrow's Goldeneye are relative long lived birds known in one case to live 18 years.
- ⇒ The Link River in the city of Klamath Falls is probably one of the best locations to observe this species during the winter on the West Coast.
- ⇒ Barrow's Goldeneye are known to feed on mollusks, aquatic insects, crustaceans, fish and fish eggs.
- ⇒ Predation occurs mainly to females, eggs and broods with black bears, American marten, Northern Flicker, raccoon, squirrels, owls and eagles documented as predators.
- ⇒ This species is known to use nest boxes.

Web References:

[www: fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges.gov](http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges.gov)

[www: klamathbirdingtrails.com](http://www.klamathbirdingtrails.com)

[www: birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide)