

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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Barrow's Goldeneye

9 Dec 1995

Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

\*Stephen J. Dinsmore

IBL 66:55, 96; Dinsmore 1997

Record Number: 95-73

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [\*6/7/96]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:55

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Dinsmore, S. J. 1997. Barrow's Goldeneye at Red Rock Reservoir. IBL 67:28.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, This record was news to me. I think Iowa ornithology would be better served by notifying other birders of records such as this.

A-D, Dark shoulder mark, white crescent-shaped facial mark, head shape, and other features described.

A-D, Key field marks seen in direct comparison with Commons.

and outermost tail feathers were white). The lack of a hood, lack of brown color on the body or wings, and broken tail band were used to age the bird as second-year. Grant (*Gulls: A Guide to Identification*, Buteo Books, 1986) indicates that most second-summer birds "acquire full hood as adult summer". This bird resembled a second-winter bird (especially the bird in photo 158 on p. 238 of Grant) because of the wing pattern and lack of a hood. Grant (1986) indicates that birds may acquire second-winter plumage as early as June and July. I believe the bird may have been molting from first-summer to second-winter plumage. This is about the twelfth record of a Laughing Gull in Iowa and continues the recent increase in records of this species in Iowa.

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## BARROW'S GOLDENEYE AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 9 December 1995, I was scanning a large flock of Common Goldeneye off Whitebreast Point on the south side of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. I soon noted a different goldeneye which I thought to be a male Barrow's. I watched the bird intermittently from 11:35 a.m. to 1:10 p.m. Compared to nearby Common Goldeneyes, this bird had a jet black mantle, a thin dark mark extending forward from the shoulder, and a white facial spot that was shaped differently. The head mostly appeared black, but had a purplish sheen under some light conditions. The head shape was distinctive: a very steep, flat forehead, gradually sloping to the rear and creating a peaked-crown effect. The dark bill was shorter than the bill of a Common Goldeneye. The mantle and wings were jet black with a line of white spots on the scapulars extending forward to the shoulder. The bird had a long, slender, crescent-shaped white mark on the face, in front of the eye. This mark was not as crisp as I would have expected at this date, and I initially thought the bird was a first-fall male. However, consultation with Bellrose (*Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*, Stackpole Books, 1976) revealed that this bird was certainly an adult male, probably at the very end of the molt to alternate plumage. All other plumage characters were those of an adult male. This is the sixth record of a Barrow's Goldeneye in Iowa.



4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

## A FALL WHIMBREL IN POLK COUNTY

JIM SINCLAIR AND STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 27 August 1995, we were birding the islands at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The exposed mudflats and short-grass habitat had attracted numerous shorebirds, including more than 40 Buff-breasted Sandpipers. At approximately 8:30 a.m., Sinclair saw a large shorebird alight in a shallow depression on one of the islands. Both of us focused on the bird and quickly identified it as a Whimbrel. The bird was crow-sized and brown overall with pale spots on the wings and mantle. The bill was twice the length of the head



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and strongly decurved. However, the bill seemed shorter than that of most of the Whimbrels we had seen previously. The bill was mostly dark with a prominent area of pale pink color at the base, mostly restricted to the lower mandible. The head pattern was striking: pale central crown stripe, dark line through the eye, and a white line above the eye. The underparts were also mottled brown. After several minutes, the bird flew south and out of sight over the lake. In flight, we could see that the wings and wing linings were dark. When it flew, the bird gave a long series of single, loud, whistled notes which we immediately recognized as belonging to this species. Because of the shortness of the bill and the extensive pink color, we concluded the bird was a juvenile.

Whimbrels are rare migrants in Iowa. There are about 27 records of this species in Iowa, all but four of them from spring (22 April-27 May with a peak from 15-25 May). The only summer record is 1 on 26 June 1988 at Algona (*IBL* 58:109). Other fall records are of single birds: 14 September 1952 at Black Hawk Lake (Dinsmore et al. 1984), 1-2 August 1987 at Riverton Wildlife Area (*IBL* 58:19), and 3 September 1987 in northern Polk County (*IBL* 58:19). Although this species is clearly more likely to occur in spring, at least a few birds probably pass through Iowa in fall.

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## BARROW'S GOLDENEYE IN LEE COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 18 December 1995 I saw an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye with a group of several thousand Common Goldeneyes on Pool 19 of the Mississippi River off Montrose, Lee County. I studied and photographed the bird from 9:20 to 10:30 a.m. at distances as close as 150 m. I was looking at a small group of Common Goldeneyes close to shore when I found a "different" male goldeneye which was easily recognizable as a male Barrow's. Compared to a male Common Goldeneye, this bird was darker-backed, had a smaller bill, a different head shape, and had black color extending forward from the shoulder. The bill was dark and was slightly shorter and slimmer at the base than the bill of a Common Goldeneye. The color of the head appeared mostly black, although in the right light there was an iridescent purple sheen. There was a small, white, comma-shaped spot on the face, in front of the eye and just above the base of the bill. This spot was smaller and of a different shape than that of a Common. The head profile was also different with a steeper forehead and a less-rounded head profile. The chest, flanks, and underside were white. The legs and feet were orange. The mantle and wings were mostly black, except for a distinct line of white spots on the scapulars that extended forward to the shoulder. A narrow black wedge extended forward from the shoulder, almost to the waterline. This is the seventh record of a Barrow's Goldeneye in Iowa. All of the records have been of males, with a possible female accompanying one of the males. By month, the records are from March (2-one remaining into April), November (2), and December (3-one remaining into January).



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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Barrow's Goldeneye  
Number: 1 adult male  
Location: Red Rock Res., Marion Co.  
Habitat: large lake  
Date: 9 December 1995  
Time: 11:35 a.m.-1:10 p.m.  
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014  
Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I was scanning a large flock of Common Goldeneye when I noticed a different goldeneye which I thought to be a male Barrow's. Compared to nearby Common Goldeneyes, this bird had a jet black mantle, a dark mark extending forward from the shoulder, and a white facial spot that was shaped differently. The head mostly appeared black, but had a purplish sheen under some light conditions. The head shape was distinctive: very steep, flat forehead, gradually sloping to the rear and creating a peaked-crown effect. The dark bill was shorter than the bill of a Common Goldeneye. A thin black mark extended forward from the shoulder. The mantle and wings were jet black with a line of white spots on the scapulars extending forward to the shoulder. The bird had a long, slender, crescent-shaped white mark on the face, in front of the eye. This mark was not as crisp as I would have expected at this date, and I initially thought the bird was a first fall male. However, consultation with a couple of sources (e.g. Bellrose 1976) revealed that this bird was certainly an adult male, probably at the very end of the molt to alternate plumage. All other plumage characters were those of an adult male.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Goldeneye eliminated by the shape of the white facial mark, head and bill shape, color of the upperparts, dark mark on the shoulder, and pattern of white on the scapulars. Note that numerous Common Goldeneye were available for direct comparison throughout the observation.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was 300m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I am very familiar with this species from work in Massachusetts and on the West Coast. Also very familiar with the similar Common Goldeneye.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America  
Bellrose Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America

How long before field notes made: written during observation

How long before this form completed: 10 December 1995