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BARROW'S GOLDENEYE WINTERING ON THE SAN JUAN RIVER, NEW MEXICO

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During each of the last four winter seasons (1989-90 through 1992-93), Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) has been sighted, photographed, and otherwise documented by various observers on the San Juan River, San Juan County, New Mexico. The most frequent sightings have occurred from four to six miles below Navajo Dam (Fig. 1). Starting with the 1989-90 season, my annual high counts for this species in that area have been 10, 13, 10, and 10 for the respective winters. As I have always surveyed the area by myself, it is possible that these numbers are minimal. Normally, at first light, the Barrow's Goldeneyes are together as a small flock on the river. However, as fishing pressure builds on these trophy waters throughout the day, the "flock" tends to disperse.

My observations, plus others known to me, suggest that Barrow's Goldeneye arrives in the San Juan River area somewhat late. There are reports for the area ranging from 11 December through 5 April, with peak numbers usually present there from February through mid-March.

Barrow's Goldeneye is invariably found in the mapped area in the company of Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*). I estimate Barrow's Goldeneye comprises only 6-10% of all goldeneyes present in the area. Positive identification of females, early first winter males, and even adult male Barrow's Goldeneye can be a problem in such circumstances. In addition to the standard field guides, both Madge and Bum (1988) and Tobish (1986) are recommended for their detailed field identification information. I have found the following field marks to be particularly useful:

> Adult males--The vertical black bar that separates the white chest and side while dipping virtually to the water line in swimming birds is distinguishable at a great distance. A male Barrow's Goldeneye will stand out dramatically among a large group of Common Goldeneye.
>
> Other ages/sexes--Differentiation between the two goldeneye species is, to me, analagous to looking at the foreheads of Redhead (*Aythya americana*) and Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*). With practice, getting the foreheads correct first will make the esoterica of bill coloring more palatable. Also, I find that examining the forehead slope on known adult males is a worthwhile exercise prior to trying to identify females.

Finally, if one is visiting this out-of-way portion of New Mexico, the reservoir is worth checking for uncommon loons: in recent years, both Yellow-billed (*Gavia adamsii*) and Red-throated (*G. stellata*) loons have been reported there. Also, Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) is a permanent resident in the wooded areas along the San Juan River. My most reliable spot for the chickadee is along the river on either side of Gobernador Wash (3A on the map).

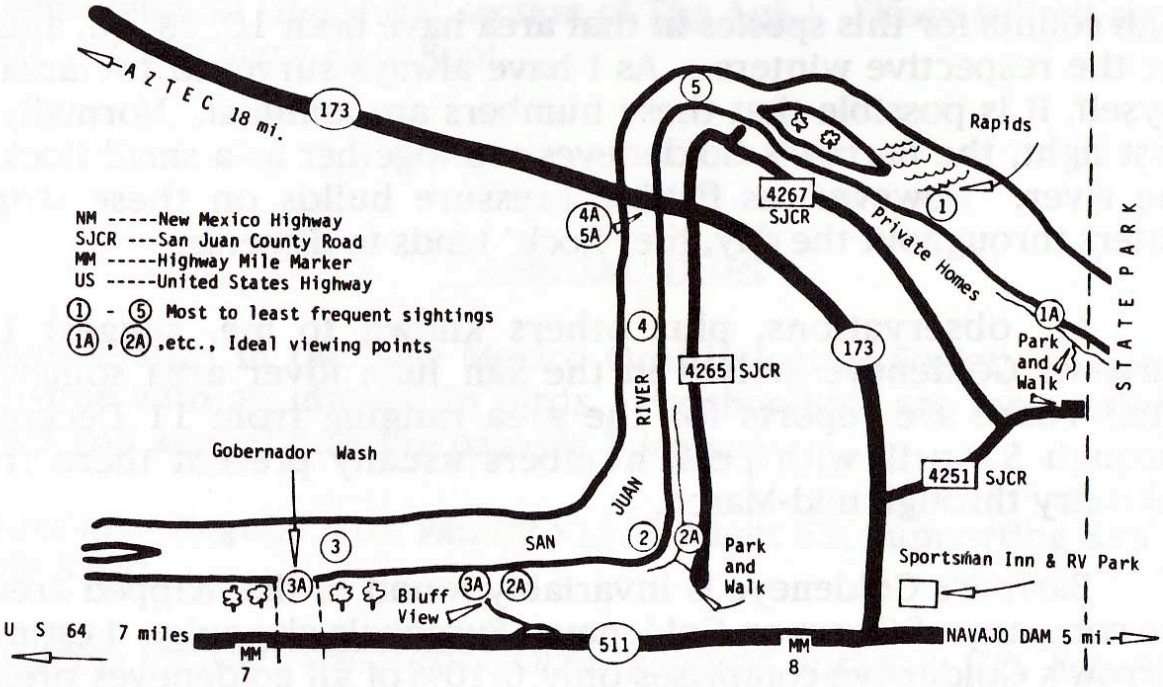

Figure 1

LITERATURE CITED

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THE 1992 NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT IN NEW MEXICO

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Birders in New Mexico joined in the first annual North American migration Count (NAMC) on 9 May 1992. This count was part of a new effort to survey birds across the United States. Most birders are familiar with the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and their importance in providing data on bird numbers, distribution, and trends. Spring "Big Day" counts, though not developed to the same level as CBCs and BBSs, also provide clues to status and numbers. The new NAMC takes elements from each of these other counts to produce a new survey effort.

The NAMC was organized by Jim Stasz of North Beach, Maryland, and in 1992 New Mexico was one of the 35 states that participated in the new activity. The

rules are similar to those of the CBC except that the area includes all of a given county and is conducted on the same day nationally whereas CBCs are restricted to a 15-mile diameter circle, can be conducted any time within a two-week period, and a fee is collected from participants. One of the benefits of the NAMC is no participation fee. The purpose of the NAMC is to provide "a picture in time" of bird migration across the North American continent.

The initial year in New Mexico provided interesting results but, unfortunately, participation was low, with only Eddy, Grant, and McKinley counties participating. The three counts on 9 May produced a total of 222 species and 13,969 individuals. Grant County produced the most species with 162, and the most high counts for species at 97. Eddy County was second in total species, had the highest number of individuals, and had high counts for 95 species. McKinley County found 89 species, 12 of which were not found elsewhere in the state on that day, and had high counts for 29 species. Fifty-five species were found on all three counts. Overall, the counts produced no really unusual records but, of course, the goal is to document migration across the continent, not to concentrate on rarities.

The 1993 NAMC was conducted in Bernalillo, Chaves, Eddy, Grant, and San Juan counties and plans are underway for 1994. I will be coordinating the 1994 efforts, and look forward to organizing counts in additional counties and in putting people in contact with the compilers for counties where the activity is already established.

EDDY COUNTY: The 1992 Eddy County count, with 14 observers, was probably the highest one-day count ever recorded in the county. Even with the 149 species total, however, several "easy" species were missed in the Guadalupe Mountains, which received only cursory coverage. Large numbers of Western Kingbirds were recorded (762) and good numbers of 8 southeastern specialities were also found: Harris's Hawk (5), Cave Swallow (1044), Painted Bunting (12), and Orchard Oriole (12). The 330 Cedar Waxwings represented a large number for so late a date. Shorebirds and herons were well represented with 84% of all herons and 80% of all shorebirds tallied on the three counts.

GRANT COUNTY: Grant County, with 20 observers, had better coverage of its area than did the other two counties. This count showed good numbers of passerines, including good representations of most of the warblers to be expected in spring. Sixty-four percent of the individual warblers found on the three counts were recorded in Grant County. Shorebirds, as expected, were scarce. Good numbers of some of the southwestern New Mexico specialities were found: Common Black-Hawk (13), Montezuma Quail (15), Gray-breasted Jay (22), Lucy's Warbler (16), Red-faced Warbler (40). Other species were found in lower numbers than expected: Greater Pewee (2), Brown-crested Flycatcher (1), Bridled Titmouse (14), Hutton's Vireo (1), Olive Warbler (1), Abert's Towhee (2). Eastern Bluebirds continued to be recorded in the area; surely there are other, as yet unknown sites where the species may summer or nest between the Rio Grande/Gila areas and the Pecos River Valley.

McKINLEY COUNTY: McKinley County produced some interesting contrasts when compared with the two southern counts. Larger numbers of waterfowl were found (53% of all waterfowl were found on this count) while many of the migrant passerines such as warblers were in low numbers. It will be interesting to see if this is the pattern in subsequent years. Does the variety of warblers noted in the southern counts peak at a later time in the northwestern part of the state? Migrant sparrows were found in good numbers. All in all, the three McKinley County observers did an excellent job finding 89 species on the count day, but it is safe to say that the low species total does not adequately reflect the richness of this area.

NOTE: A total species list is available from the author at the above address by sending a stamped, addressed envelope.

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