

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*



Folk Name: Whistler, Cock Dipper

Status: Winter Visitor

Abundance: Rare

Habitat: Lakes, ponds

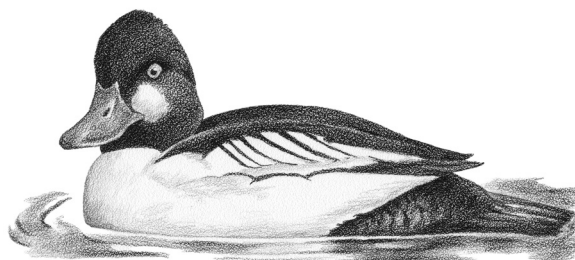
This curious diving duck is the same size as our common Wood Duck, and it is a rare winter visitor to lakes and ponds in our region. The drake shows lots of white on the body and wings. Its head is greenish black and it has an obvious, rounded, white cheek patch between the bill and the eye. The female has a gray body and brown head and like the male, shows white on its wings. Both have a noticeable amber-gold-colored eye:

“The American golden-eye duck commonly is known as the whistler because of the sound made by its wings during flight. ... [It] is an expert diver and is able to remain under water for nearly a minute.”

—*The Gastonia Gazette*, January 6, 1956,
and February 24, 1956

T.G. Pearson noted the Goldeneye as a wary prey that is particularly troublesome to hunt:

The Golden-eye or Whistler is of wide distribution, being found at some time of the year throughout the greater part of North America. Difficult at all times to kill, it knows well the hunting methods of the Eskimo of the North and the [hunter] of the South. As a diver it is an expert, and often disappears at the flash of a gun.



Mr. and Mrs. Shuford K. Peeler found and studied a female Common Goldeneye at length on Concord Lakes in Cabarrus County on December 28, 1962. The Peelers immediately notified local birders so that this rare duck could be added as a count week bird for the newly established Cabarrus Christmas Bird Count. This observation appears to be the first dated record for this region.

There have been almost 50 sightings since this first report and sightings have come from lakes scattered throughout the region. Most sightings of Common Goldeneye in the Central Carolinas are of one or two birds; however, flocks of 6, 10, 11, and 13 birds have been seen. This duck appears later in the region than most. Our earliest recorded arrival date is 2 December, and our latest departure date is 4 April. Most have departed by the middle of March. The Goldeneye has been reported 8 out of the first 16 years of the twenty-first century.