

Barrow's Goldeneye at Winthrop Harbor, Lake County

On 31 January 1995 Paul Sweet discovered an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) at Winthrop Harbor, Lake County. Sweet observed the bird on Lake Michigan outside and south of the NorthPoint Marina harbor entrance near the rocky breakwaters. On 4 February Bob Erickson and Sherman Suter observed the bird inside the harbor mouth. The next day the goldeneye could not be relocated in Winthrop Harbor but Rick Siebert discovered the bird in Pleasant Prairie, Kenosha County, Wisconsin. Siebert observed the bird in a large goldeneye flock.

On 6 February I found the bird inside the NorthPoint Marina jetty with a dozen or more Common Goldeneyes (*B. clangula*). I noted its smaller bill than the Common Goldeneyes, the prominent loreal white crescent to and above the eye, the steep forehead, and the blackish to maroonish-purple head with a very sloped rear crown. I also noted the black back which came closer to the waterline than the other goldeneyes. The bird also had six white "squares" on each side of the back with two white oblong rectangles at the lower part of the black feathering closest to the white flanks. On 10 February, Scott Hickman and I relocated this bird at 106th Street and 1st Ave. in Pleasant Prairie just offshore Lake Michigan. To my knowledge Donald Dann of Highland Park was the last person to observe the bird early on 11 February at Pleasant Prairie.

Mlodinow (1984) listed only 11 dates (since 1955) for this rare winter visitor in the Chicago area. Since Mlodinow's cut-off date of 1982 for bird records included in his publication there have been several records of immatures and female Barrow's Goldeneyes which are very difficult to separate from Common Goldeneyes. This record is to my knowledge the first verifiable report of an adult male since 1978 in the Chicago area although there is a reliable observation of an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye at Waukegan's new south harbor mouth (Lake County) on 12 February 1992 (R. Gogh pers. comm.).

Literature Cited

Mlodinow, S. 1984 Chicago area birds. Chicago Review Press. Chicago, IL

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American Coot Migration in Sangamon County

I've never seen a flock of American Coots (*Fulica americana*) migrating and I don't suppose anyone else has either, since they are nocturnal migrants. They may occasionally fly short distances in daylight when chased by a motorboat, bearing down on the flock. But ordinarily, coots are seldom seen flying.

I usually watch Lake Springfield in the evening because most ducks, coots, grebes, loons, and gulls move toward the center of the lake for roosting, making them easier to count. They probably do this for protection from predators.

Several hundred coots were on Lake Springfield in Sangamon County, Illinois, around Marine Point on 2 April 1995. Many of the coots were moving out from the edge of the lake toward the center. It was past sundown, but there was an afterglow, providing enough light to see well. Some of the first stars had begun to appear and there was a sliver of moon. A light, southerly wind was blowing and it was clear, without cloud cover.

I saw a coot paddle along and fly into the air. I expected it to land again, but it climbed higher into the sky. I've never seen a coot flying that high before. I watched it flutter in a slow curve. It started toward the south into the wind, then arched around, in slow, up-spiraling circles. Finally, it was several hundred feet in the air, but still visible. It then straightened its course and flew north, out of sight.

I looked back to where the coot had started its flight and several more coots were performing the spiral-up routine. I watched several fly north. One or two dropped back to the water, but now, the sky over the lake was full of coots beginning nocturnal migration.

What amazed me was that the effort was an individual thing. It was not done as a flock. Most coots are observed sitting on the water in flocks during migration. However, what I observed was coots leaving individually, though many were in the air at once. I did not hear any vocalizations which would have kept the coots in contact. I speculate that once they reach a certain elevation, they may form a flock. I watched until about 8 p.m. The coots were still departing, but I could just barely discern them in the darkening sky.

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