GOLDEN-EYE DUCK.

+FULIGULA CLANGULA, *Linn.*

PLATE CCCCVI.—MALE AND FEMALE.

You have now before you another of our Ducks, which at least equals any of the rest in the extent of its migrations. Braving the blasts of the north, it visits the highest latitudes in spring, and returns at the approach of winter, spreading over the whole country, as if it seemed not to care in what region it spends its time, provided it find abundance of water. Now propelling itself gaily, it may be seen searching the pebbly or rocky bottom of the Ohio, or diving deep in the broad bays of Massachusetts or the Chesapeake. Presently it emerges with a cray-fish or a mussel held firmly in its bill. It shakes its head, and over its flattened back roll the large pearly drops of water, unable to penetrate the surface of its compact and oily plumage. The food is swallowed, and the bird, having already glanced around, suddenly plunges headlong. Happy being! Equally fitted for travelling through the air and the water, and not altogether denied the pleasure of walking on the shore; endowed with a cunning, too, which preserves you from many at least of the attempts of man to destroy you; and instinctively sagacious enough to place your eggs deep in the hollow of a tree, where they are secure from the nocturnal prowler, and, amid the down of your snowy breast, are fostered until the expected young come forth. Then with your own bill you carry your brood to the lake, where, under your tender care they grow apace. The winged marauders, rapid as their flight may be, cannot injure you there; for while your young ones sink into the deep waters, you arise on whistling wings, and, swifter than Jer Falcon, speed away.

In South Carolina the Golden-eye is abundant during winter, when it at times frequents the reserves of the rice-planters. I have also met with it on the water-courses of the Floridas at that season. From these countries westward and northward, it may be found in all parts of the Union where the waters are not frozen. It is seldom seen on small ponds entirely surrounded by trees, but prefers open places, and on the Ohio is generally found in the more rapid parts, on the eddies of which it dives for food.

This species exhibits a degree of cunning which surpasses that of many other Ducks, and yet at times it appears quite careless. When I have been

Golden Eye Duck.

1. Male. 2. Female.

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walking, without any object in view, along the banks of the Ohio, between Shippingport and Louisville, I have often seen the Golden-eyes, fishing almost beneath me, when, although I had a gun, they would suffer me to approach within a hundred paces. But at other times, if I crawled or hid myself in any way while advancing towards them, with a wish to fire at them, they would, as if perfectly aware of my intentions, keep at a distance of fully two hundred yards. On the former occasion they would follow their avocations quite unconcernedly; while on the latter, one of the flock would remain above as if to give intimation of the least appearance of danger. If, in the first instance, I fired my gun at them, they would all dive with the celerity of lightning, but on emerging, would shake their wings as if in defiance. But if far away on the stream, when I fired at them, instead of diving, they would all at once stretch their necks, bend their bodies over the water, and paddle off with their broad webbed feet, until the air would resound with the smart whistling of their wings, and away they would speed, quite out of sight, up the river. In this part of the country, they are generally known by the name of "Whistlers."

I have observed that birds of this species rarely go to the shores to rest until late in the evening, and even then they retire to secluded rocks, slightly elevated above the surface, or to the margins of sand-bars, well protected by surrounding waters. In either case, it is extremely difficult for a man to get near them; but it is different with the sly racoon, which I have on several occasions surprised in the dawn, feeding on one which it had caught under night. Yet, on some of the bays of our sea-coasts, the Whistlers are easily enticed to alight by the coarsest representations of their figures in wooden floats, and are shot while they pass and repass over the place to assure themselves that what they see is actually a bird of their own kind. This mode is successfully followed in the bay and harbour of Boston in Massachusetts, as well as farther to the eastward.

The Golden-eye is rarely if ever seen in the company of any other species than those which are, like itself, expert divers; such, for example, as the Mergansers, or the Buffel-headed Duck; and it is very rare to see all the individuals of a flock immersed at once. Sometimes, when suddenly surprised, they immediately dive, and do not rise again until quite out of gunshot. When wounded, it is next to impossible to catch them; for their power of remaining under water is most surprising, and the sooner one gives up the chase the better.

The Golden-eye Ducks manifest a propensity to adhere to a place which they find productive, and that to a most extraordinary degree. One day, while approaching the shallow fording-place of Canoe creek, near Henderson, in Kentucky, I observed five Whistlers fishing and swimming about.

They allowed me to advance to within a few yards of the shore, when, swimming close together, and shaking their necks, they emitted their rough croaking notes. Not being desirous of shooting them, I slapped my hands smartly together, when in an instant they all went down, but suddenly rose again, and running as it were over the water for about ten yards, took flight, passed and repassed several times over the ford, and alighted on the large branches of a sycamore that hung over the creek, at no greater distance from where I stood than about twenty yards. This was the first time in my life that I had seen Golden-eyes alight on a tree. I waded to the opposite side, and gazed upon them with amazement for several minutes. When on the eve of pursuing my course, one of them, gliding downwards with nearly closed wings, launched upon the water, and at once dived. The other four followed one after another, somewhat in the manner of Pigeons or Starlings, as if to ascertain whether some danger might not still exist. I left them at their avocations, and soon after met a family of country people going to Henderson, one of whom asked me respecting the depth of the ford, to which I replied that the water was low, and added that they should be careful lest some Ducks that I had left there might frighten the horses on which the women were. The good folks, with whom I was acquainted, laughed, and we parted.

About four o'clock, as I was returning, with a fine Turkey-cock slung to my back, I met the same party, who told me that, "sure enough," the Ducks were at the ford, and I was likely to have "a good crack at them." There they were when I went up, and I forced them to fly off; but as I was proceeding, and not more than fifty yards beyond the creek, I heard their splashings as they again alighted. In the course of a fortnight I visited the place several times, but never missed finding these five Ducks there. This led me to inquire as to the cause, and, having undressed, I waded out barefooted, and examined the bottom, which I found to be composed of rather hard blue clay, full of holes bored by cray-fish. But to make myself quite sure that these creatures formed the attraction to the Ducks, I watched an opportunity, and shot two of the latter, the examination of which satisfied me on the subject.

I had long before this been convinced, that an abundant supply of food afforded a powerful attraction to migrating birds, and on this subject you may remember my remarks in the articles of the Wild Turkey and Passenger Pigeon; but I had not then, nor have I since, seen so strong an instance of pertinacity in attachment to a particular spot.

The flight of this species is powerful, extremely rapid, and wonderfully protracted. It passes along with a speed equal to that of any of the Duck tribe, and I believe can easily traverse the space of ninety miles in an hour.

The whistling of its wings may be distinctly heard when it is more than half a mile distant. This statement may be found to be in contradiction to those of probably every previous writer, for it has been a general opinion, that the greater the extent of wing the more rapid is the flight, which is anything but correct. On flying from the water, they proceed for a considerable distance very low, not rising to any height until they have advanced several hundred yards.

The only nest of the Golden-eye which I have examined, I discovered, on the 15th of June, on the margin of a small creek about eight miles from Green Bay. The female left it, probably to go in search of food, whilst I was sitting under the tree in which it was, thinking more of my peculiar situation than of birds of any kind, for I was almost destitute of ammunition, and bent on returning to my family, then in Louisiana. How exciting are such moments to the ardent observer of Nature! In an instant, hunger, fatigue, even the thoughts of my beloved wife and children, vanished; and in a few minutes I was safely lodged on the tree, and thrusting my arm into the cavity of a large broken branch. Nine beautiful, greenish, smooth eggs, almost equally rounded at both ends, were at my disposal. They were laid on some dry grass of the kind that grew on the edges of the creek, and were deeply imbedded in the down of the bird. Not being then aware of the necessity of measuring or keeping eggs, I roasted them on some embers, and finding them truly delicious, soon satisfied my hunger. While I was eating them, the bird returned, but no male was to be seen. Whether many of these birds breed within the limits of the Union I cannot tell. Dr. RICHARDSON says they are abundant in the Fur Countries, and Mr. TOWNSEND states, that they are plentiful on the Rocky Mountains and along the north-west coast of America.

Of the changes which the young males undergo, nothing is known beyond the fact, that the young of both sexes resemble the adult female, until the approach of the first spring, when their general migration northward removes them from our observation.

At the approach of spring, I have observed this species swell the throat and the feathers of the head, and emit their rough croaking notes very frequently. The males at this period become very pugnacious, though, after all, they remove northward together, preceding the females for at least a fortnight. They usually spend the autumn and the earlier parts of winter separate from the females. These birds have, like the Goosanders, a habit of shaking their heads violently on emerging from the water. Their flesh is fishy, and in my opinion unfit for being eaten, unless in cases of excessive hunger. The food of this species, while on fresh water, consists of fish of various kinds, mollusca, young frogs, tadpoles, crayfish, and, I believe, some

kinds of grass. When on salt water, they feed principally on bivalves and fishes of different species.

GOLDEN-EYE, *Anas Clangula*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. viii. p. 62.

FULIGULA CLANGULA, Bonap. Syn., p. 393.

CLANGULA VULGARIS, *Common Golden-eye*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 456.

CLANGULA BARROVII, *Rocky-mountain Garrot*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 453.

COMMON GOLDEN-EYE, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 441.

GOLDEN-EYE DUCK, *Fuligula Clangula*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 318; vol. v. p. 105.

Male, 20, 31½. Female, 16, 28.

Abundant during winter on all the running streams of the interior, as well as along the Atlantic coast, as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. Breeds in high northern latitudes. Accidental in the North-eastern Districts. Rocky Mountains and Columbia river.

Adult Male in winter.

Bill shorter than the head, deeper than broad at the base, gradually depressed toward the end, which is rounded. Upper mandible with the dorsal line straight and sloping to the middle, then slightly concave, and finally decurved; the ridge broad and rather concave at the base, narrowed between the nostrils, convex towards the end, the frontal angles long, the sides erect at the base, sloping and convex towards the end, the edges soft, with about fifty lamellæ, the unguis oblong and decurved. Nostrils medial, linear, pervious, nearer the ridge than the margin. Lower mandible flattened, ascending, nearly straight, a little curved at the base, the angle long, rather narrow, the dorsal line very slightly convex, the edges with about fifty lamellæ, the unguis broadly elliptical.

Head large, compressed. Eyes of moderate size. Neck short and thick. Body compact, much depressed. Feet very short, placed far back; tarsus very short, compressed, having anteriorly in its whole length a series of small scutella, and above the outer toe a few broad scales, the rest covered with reticular angular scales. Hind toe very small, with a broad free membrane beneath; anterior toes longer than the tarsus, connected by reticulated membranes, having a sinus on their free margins, the inner with a narrow, lobed, marginal membrane, the outer with a thickened edge, the third and fourth about equal and longest, all covered above with numerous narrow scutella. Claws small, slightly arched, compressed, obtuse, that of first toe very small, of third largest, and with an inner thin edge.

Plumage dense, soft and blended; feathers on the fore part of the head and cheeks very small and rounded, on the upper and hind parts, linear and elongated, as they also are on the lateral and hind parts of the upper neck, so

that when raised they give the head a very tumid appearance, which is the more marked that the feathers of the neck beneath are short. Wings small, decurved, pointed; the outer primaries pointed, the first generally longest, the second slightly shorter, in some specimens a little longer, the rest rapidly graduated; the secondaries incurved, obliquely rounded, the inner much elongated. Tail short, graduated, of sixteen feathers.

Bill black. Iris bright yellow. Feet orange-yellow, webs dusky, claws black. Head and upper part of neck deep green, changing to purple in certain lights. Back, posterior scapulars, inner secondaries, edge of wing, alula, primary coverts, primary quills, and four or five outer secondaries, black,—the back being darker and glossy, the wing-feathers tinged with brown. An elliptical patch between the base of the bill and the eye, lower part of neck all round, sides of the body anteriorly, the lower parts generally, the scapulars, excepting their margins, which are black, a large patch on the wing, including many of the smaller coverts, some of the secondary coverts, and six or seven of the secondary quills, pure white. The basal part of the secondary coverts black. Axillar feathers and lower wing-coverts dusky; the elongated feathers of the sides have the inner, some of them also their outer margins black, that colour in those of the innermost covering the whole inner web. The feathers on the legs, and along the sides of the rump, dusky. The tail brownish-grey.

Length to end of tail 20 inches, to end of wings $17\frac{1}{2}$, to end of claws $20\frac{1}{4}$; extent of wings $31\frac{1}{2}$; bill along the ridge $1\frac{5}{8}$, from the angles 2, along the edge of lower mandible $2\frac{3}{12}$; wing from flexure 9; tail $4\frac{1}{2}$; tarsus $1\frac{5}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{6\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; second toe $1\frac{9}{12}$, its claw $\frac{3\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; third toe $2\frac{1}{4}$, its claw $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; fourth toe $2\frac{4}{12}$, its claw $\frac{3}{12}$. Weight 2 lbs. $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

Of another male, length to end of tail $19\frac{1}{2}$, to end of claws $21\frac{1}{2}$, to end of wings 17; extent of wings 31.

Adult Female.

The female is much smaller. Bill dusky, a portion at the end, not however including the unguis, dull yellowish-orange. Eyes and feet as in the male. Head and upper part of neck dull reddish-brown. Lower part of neck and the sides of the body brownish-grey, the feathers margined with pale grey. Upper parts greyish-brown, much darker behind; tail brownish-grey; wings brownish-black, seven of their coverts, excepting at the bases, white, the smaller coverts lighter and tipped with greyish-white; the legs and sides of the rump greyish-brown.

Length to end of tail 16 inches, to end of wings 15, to end of claws $17\frac{1}{4}$; extent of wings 28; wing from flexure $8\frac{1}{2}$; tail $3\frac{1}{4}$; bill along the ridge $1\frac{3}{8}$, from the angles $1\frac{3}{4}$, along the lower mandible $1\frac{5\frac{1}{2}}{8}$; tarsus $1\frac{3\frac{1}{2}}{8}$; hind toe $\frac{5}{8}$, its claw $\frac{1\frac{1}{2}}{8}$; middle toe $2\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{8}$, its claw $\frac{3}{8}$; outer toe $\frac{1}{8}$ longer; inner toe and claw 2. Weight $1\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.

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1. Male. 2. Female.

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Audubon, John James. 1843. "Golden-Eye Duck, *Fuligula clangula*, Linn. [Pl. 406]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 6, 362–367. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319519>.

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