
Barrow's Goldeneye

Bucephala islandica

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics:

Barrow's goldeneye is a medium-sized diving duck. The male is identified by an iridescent black head, crescent-shaped white patch between the bill and eye, and a black and white bar pattern on side above the wings. The female has a chocolate brown head, white breast and dull brown body. Both sexes have a bright yellow eye. It is mainly found in North America but there's also a small population in Iceland ([Audubon](#)).

Behavior:

As Barrow's are a diving duck, they have to run across the water to build up speed in order to take flight. They spend most of their time foraging for food, and the rest of the time preening. Except during breeding season, they are rarely found in large flocks ([BioKids](#)).

Reproduction:

Goldeneye are cavity nesters and are not particular about raising their own offspring. Like many ducks, they demonstrate nest parasitism where the female will lay her eggs in other ducks' nests. Once the eggs hatch, the ducklings will often come together to be raised by a single female. Goldeneye ducklings are precocial (well developed) and highly independent. They feed on their own and required little parental care ([Cornell](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Aquatic invertebrates, occasionally small fish and fish eggs, and vegetation

Zoo: Scratch grains, greens, waterfowl pellets

Conservation:

Like most North American ducks, Barrow's are protected under the Migratory Bird Act but are listed as Least Concern by IUCN.

FYI:

Barrow's goldeneye were named for Sir John Barrow who was an English admiralty official in honor of his promoting discovery missions to the Arctic ([About Birding](#)).



Range & Habitat:

Lakes and ponds



Lifespan: up to 25 years in captivity, 18-20 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Barrow's goldeneye are usually silent, except during breeding season when both sexes will make soft, quiet sounds to each other.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

