

### Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

The Common Goldeneye is far from common in San Diego County. It is an uncommon winter visitor only in the salt works of south San Diego Bay and rare elsewhere. The species is on decline in San Diego Bay, probably more because of a shift in the species' winter distribution than because of a decline in total numbers.

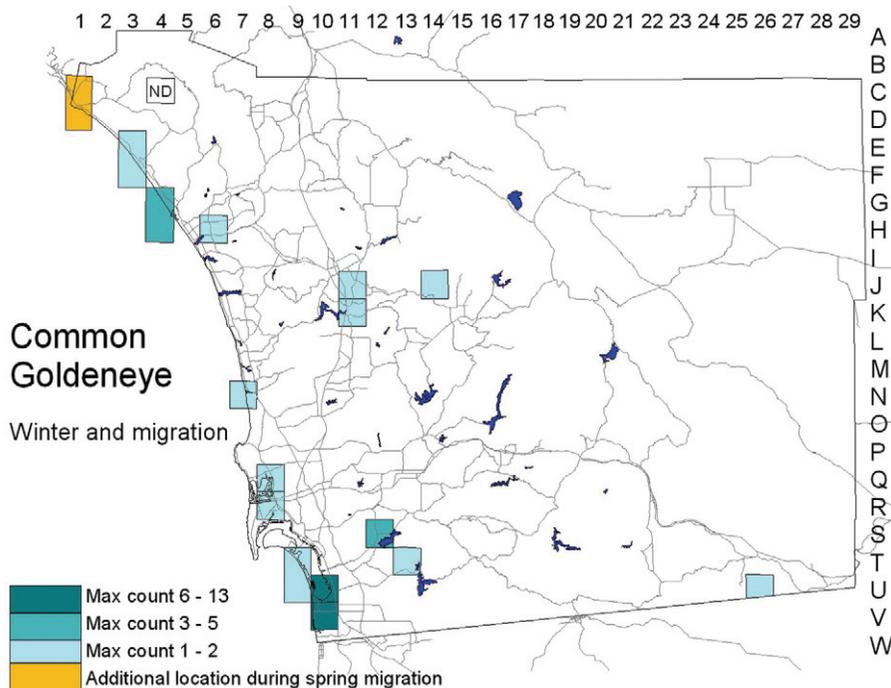
**Winter:** The south end of San Diego Bay is the only current regular site for the Common Goldeneye in San Diego County. From 1997 to 2002 numbers here ranged up to only eight individuals, except for 13 on 16 February 2001 (G. Grantham). Weekly surveys of the salt works from February 1993 to February 1994 yielded a maximum of 17 in February 1994 and monthly averages of no more than eight (Stadtlander and Konecny 1994). Surveys of south San Diego Bay outside the salt works 1988–89 revealed no more than five per day. Other regular studies throughout San Diego Bay outside the salt works 1993–95 did not find any (Manning 1995, Mock et al. 1994, Preston and Mock 1995).

Elsewhere along the coast of San Diego County the goldeneye is seldom seen. During the atlas period only



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

about 10 individuals showed up along the coast away from south San Diego Bay. All sightings were of single individuals, except for two in the east basin of Buena Vista Lagoon (H6) 23 December 1998 and up to three in the Santa Margarita River estuary (G4) 27 January 1999 (P. A. Ginsburg). Inland, the species is even scarcer but shows up occasionally on small ponds as well as larger lakes. Inland sightings during the atlas period were of one at 3.3 miles southeast of central Escondido (J11) 29



December 2001 (P. Hernandez), two in Boden Canyon (J14) 18 January 1999 (R. L. Barber), one at the east end of Lake Hodges (K11) 27 December 1998 (O. Carter), four on Sweetwater Reservoir (S12) 17 January 2002 (G. Chaniot), one on Upper Otay Lake (T13) 14 February 1999 (J. R. Barth), and one on Lake Domingo (U26) 13 January 2000 (F. L. Unmack). In the Anza-Borrego the only record is of three on a golf-course pond at Club Circle, Borrego Springs (G24), 23 December 1967 (ABDSP database).

**Migration:** Dates for the Common Goldeneye in San Diego County extend from "October" 1919 (Mission Bay, SDNHM 2168) and 9 November

(1962, three on San Diego Bay, AFN 17:67, 1963) to 21 March 1999 (one in the Santa Margarita River estuary, P. A. Ginsburg) and 7 April 2000 (eight in the salt works, R. T. Patton), except for the three summer stragglers listed by Unitt (1984).

**Conservation:** Numbers of Common Goldeneyes in San Diego County have declined almost continuously since the early 1960s. The peak on the San Diego Christmas bird count was 94 on 31 December 1961. From 1963 to 1982 the count averaged 19.1 goldeneyes, from 1983 to 1992 it averaged 13.1, and from 1993 to 2002 it averaged only 3.5.

Eadie et al. (1995) reported that the Common

Goldeneye's population, taken as a whole, was approximately stable through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it seems likely that the birds have simply shifted, perhaps not needing to migrate as far south as San Diego as the climate warms. Also, since the 1980s, Common Goldeneyes have begun wintering in large numbers on the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam (Rosenberg et al. 1991, LaRue et al. 2001). These birds presumably abandoned other sites where they had wintered previously.

**Taxonomy:** The Common Goldeneye is usually divided into an Old World and a New World subspecies; *B. c. americana* (Bonaparte, 1838) is the one in North America.