

common goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The common goldeneye averages 20 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The male has black feathers on the back and white feathers on the lower body with green head feathers and a white facial spot. The female and immature goldeneyes have brown head feathers and gray body feathers with a white ring on the neck. Three of the toes are webbed to help with swimming. The bill is flattened and has a toothlike fringe on its edge to help strain food from the water.

BEHAVIORS

The common goldeneye is a common migrant and winter resident in Illinois. This bird is a good diver and may be seen around ponds, sewage lagoons, large rivers and lakes. Its wings produce a whistling sound in flight. The male makes a “pee-ik” sound while the female makes a “quack” sound. Spring migration begins in April. The goldeneye breeds in Canada and the northern United States. Courtship displays may begin as early as January. In the display the male throws his head back and swiftly brings it forward while giving a nasal call. The nest is built in a tree cavity. The female deposits five to 15, green eggs that she alone incubates over the 28-day incubation period. Fall migrants begin arriving in September and do not go much further south than Illinois. The common goldeneye eats small plants and animals found in the water.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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