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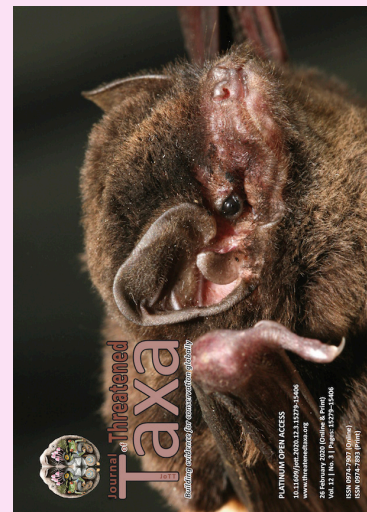
NOTE

AN ACCOUNT OF A FIRST RECORD OF THE COMMON GOLDENEYE *BUCEPHALA CLANGULA* LINNAEUS, 1758 (AVES: ANSERIFORMES: ANATIDAE) IN BHUTAN

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An account of a first record of the Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Linnaeus, 1758 (Aves: Anseriformes: Anatidae) in Bhutan

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Punatsang Chhu in Wangduephodrang (27.486°N, 89.899°E; 1,273m) is one of the largest rivers and an important zone in Bhutan for resident and migrant water birds. It is the expanse where diverse birds species are seen on a stretch between 27.462°N–89.901°E and 27.579°N–89.867°E (Tobgay 2017). Large numbers of winter migratory water birds in Bhutan have been found in this location (Spierenburg 2005). The Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* was first sighted on 5 January 2019 along Punatsang Chhu 27.512°N 89.887°E at an elevation of 1,142m at 10.05h. On 8 January 2019, photographs of the bird were successfully taken at around 12.30h while it foraged along the sand extraction sites in the river. The duck was observed diving frequently under water foraging at the time of sighting. It was then photographed with the help of a DSLR canon 70D camera with a 70–300 mm until it flew away to the other side of the river.

The plumage, sloppy bill structure, triangular large head, and its prominent golden eyes apart from its other morphological features that identified the bird as the Common Goldeneye (female). Various field guides ‘Birds of the Indian Subcontinent’ (Grimmett et al. 2011) and

‘Birds in Bhutan’ (Spierenburg 2005) and experts’ advice through Birds of Bhutan (social forum) were used for further verification. Dr. Sherub, the only ornithologist in Bhutan at Ugyen Wangchuk Institute for Conservation and Environmental Research (UWICER), Bumthang and international ornithologist Dr. Tim Inskipp also verified the bird record.

The Common Goldeneye is a medium-sized duck with a large head. The bill is fairly small and narrow with triangular shape, streamlined body and short tailed. Both sexes measure a length of 40–51 cm, weighing approximately 800g (Eadie et al. 1995; Johnsgard 2010) with a wingspan of 77–83 cm. Males are customarily white with white windows along the folded wing. Head blackish with an iridescent greenish glow (Johnsgard 2010), with a round white spot behind the bill. Females have a head that is completely dark chocolate brown that contrasts with its grey body (Johnsgard 2010). Bill is mostly blackish, with yellow at the tip. In flight it shows an extensive white on the inner half of the blackish wing. It is known as ‘whistler’ because of the whistling noise the wings make in flight (Eadie et al. 1995; Johnsgard 2010). Both sexes have golden-yellow eyes during

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**Oriental
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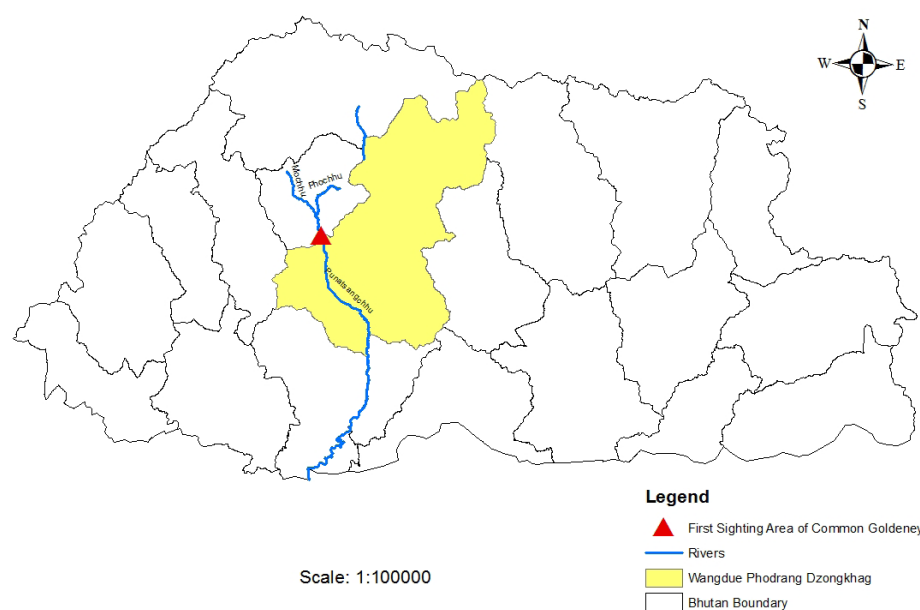


Figure 1. Location of first sighting and the distribution of the Common Goldeneye.

adulthoods but lack the golden eye in immature birds. Thus, it is named for its golden-yellow iris.

The Common Goldeneye is a confrontational and territorial duck (Eadie et al. 1995) competing for food and nest sites with other water birds. This species takes short-distance (Eadie et al. 1995; Kear 2005) flights but flies at higher altitudes when travelling over longer distances (Eadie et al. 1995), and breeds from April in solitary pairs (Del Hoyo et al. 1992; Eadie et al. 1995).

It is constrained to stay near the water close to the shore and less than 10m deep, showing a predilection for waters 4m deep (Scott & Rose 1996; Johnsgard 2010). They are diving birds that forage underwater preying on crustaceans, aquatic insects and plants and molluscs (Cottam 1939) and invertebrates (Erikson 1979). Their important food items consist of fish, invertebrate eggs, and aquatic plant materials (Eadie et al. 1995). They are fast fliers. When females are nearby, males recurrently display by elongating the head backward against their rear and then popping their head onward.

The suitable habitats include fresh water lakes, pools, rivers and deep marshes enclosed by coniferous forest (Del Hoyo et al. 1992; Johnsgard 2010).

This species ranges across the boreal forests of Scandinavia, eastern Europe, Russia, Mongolia, northern China, Canada, Alaska, and northern USA. Its wintering range is correspondingly broad, encompassing the coast of northern Europe including inland United Kingdom, scattered coastal and inland water bodies in southeastern Europe (Turkey) and central Asia, the coasts of eastern China, Korea, Japan and the Kamchatka peninsula



Image 1. The Common Goldeneye foraging near the sand extraction sites.

(Russia), the Pacific coast of Canada and the Alaskan coast and inland USA (Del Hoyo et al. 1992).

The IUCN Red List status of this bird is Least Concern owing to a stable population trend (BirdLife International 2019). Since it is the first record to Bhutan, the species is a vagrant and uncommon winter visitor to Bhutan. According to Tobgay (2017), 49 species of water birds along Punatsang Chhu basin were reported and more likely to have ascended with the sighting of the Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (18 August 2018), Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (18 November 2018) and the recent new record of the Common Goldeneye (5 January 2019).

Numerous birders in the country consider that

Punatsang Chhu, the expanse between Punakha and Wangduephodrang is a fundamental stopover domicile for many waterbirds and if any anthropogenic instability in the area will distress the migration of the bird species taking a route through Bhutan. Many birds have been threatened due to sand extraction and many development activities taking place currently.

With this confirmed record of the Common Goldeneye in Bhutan, the total number of avifauna recorded in Bhutan has reached 747, indicating a very high bird diversity for the size of the country.

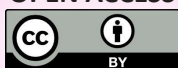
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