**Goldeneye**

*Bucephala clangula*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

External appearance

Body length: 62–77 cm; weight: 0.5–1.2 kg. The Goldeneye is a medium-sized duck with a compact, rounded body, short neck, large head and short, dark-grey bill. The species exhibits sexual dimorphism: males are slightly larger than females and each sex has distinctive plumage. During the breeding season, the male has a dark green head with an iridescent sheen and an oval white patch below the eye at the base of the bill. Its eyes are bright yellow/golden. Its flanks, chest and neck are white, the back and tail are black, the wings are black and white. The female has a chocolate-brown head, a rather narrow white ring around its neck, and pale yellow eyes. Its body is greyish brown with a dark back, tail and wings. Young birds resemble females.

Distribution

From northern and central Europe eastwards across Eurasia to Kamchatka. In North America, from Alaska to the Labrador Peninsula. It winters on the North Sea and Baltic Sea coasts, in most of southern Europe, the eastern Mediterranean basin, in the Black and Caspian Seas, and in Kazakhstan and eastern China. In North America it winters along the Pacific coast, south to the Gulf of California; inland it goes south of its breeding range all the way to Florida.

The Goldeneye is a relatively common breeding, migrant and wintering species in Latvia. It breeds throughout the country near a variety of water bodies, even quite small ones. In the second half of summer, large flocks of molting Goldeneyes concentrate in various parts of the sea. When migrating they are frequently at sea, as well as inland in places. They winter along the seacoast and in unfrozen inland waters.

Diet

Feeds on aquatic invertebrates – molluscs, insect larvae, beetles, etc.

Nesting

Nests in tree hollows or in suitable nest boxes, which may be located up to several kilometres from the nearest water. Nests are lined with grey-white fluff. Only the female incubates the eggs and raises the young. Females lay 5–11 eggs at a time.

Goldeneyes and humans

Goldeneyes are hunted in Latvia. People often help golodeneyes by making nest boxes for them.

Interesting facts

Goldeneyes can dive to a depth of 4 m.