WATERFOWL

We consider 14 waterfowl species of Old World origin and 4 of New World origin to have occurred as rare birds in N America. Our understanding of vagrancy patterns among waterfowl is potentially clouded, however, by the fact that many species are widely held in captivity, both publically and privately, and unknown numbers escape. Generally, it is the more attractively colored species that are most popular, and free-flying Mandarin Ducks or Bar-headed Geese are usually dismissed as escapes from captivity, given the low likelihood that they would occur as natural vagrants. Problems arise when vagrancy and escapes both seem possible, as with whistling-ducks in the Southeast and shelducks in the Northeast. In such cases, we have tried to weigh the odds and present the pros and cons of the arguments. Our inclusion of species here only reflects our opinion that vagrancy is plausible, not that we necessarily accept any records as 'good' or reject others as 'bad.'

Brightly colored male ducks are also more favored in collections than duller females, but within wild populations there is also often a male-biased sex ratio (e.g., Donald 2007), and males also may be more prone to wandering. Hence, we would expect to see more males among wild vagrants. Moreover, brightly patterned males also draw greater attention in the field than females, both among birders and hunters.

Being large, generally conspicuous, and popular, most species of rare waterfowl have now been recorded in N America. Future additions seem most likely to derive from taxonomic splitting. For example, Common Scoter *M. nigra* of W Eurasia (formerly treated as conspecific with Black Scoter) and Velvet Scoter *M. [f.] fusca* also of W Eurasia (split by most European authorities from White-winged Scoter of N America) seem possible vagrants; in the Northeast they should be looked for with wintering scoter flocks. Stejneger's Scoter *M. [fusca] stejnegeri* (also split from White-winged by some Old World authorities) has been found recently in w. Alaska, where it was almost certainly overlooked in past years.

Old World Waterfowl

Among Old World vagrant waterfowl, 5 species originate primarily in E Asia, with records only from AK (Lesser White-fronted Goose, Eastern Spot-billed Duck) or from AK and elsewhere in the West (Whooper Swan, Falcated Duck, Baikal Teal); these occur mainly in spring and fall in AK, and in winter in the West. A further 4 species (Tundra Bean Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, Common Pochard, Smew) largely conform to this same AK/West pattern, but have been recorded in fall and winter as far e. as e. Canada (mainly QC) and the Northeast; it seems likely that most or all of these e. birds (except perhaps Common Pochard) also originated in E Asia and dispersed e. across N America. Of the remaining 5 species, 3 (Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, and Common Shelduck) occur in fall–spring, primarily in the Northeast, and may reflect an overflow of burgeoning European populations, and 1 species (Ruddy Shelduck) has occurred in late summer in Arctic Canada, presumably as part of a dispersal event from interior Asia. The remaining species, Garganey, is also the most widespread vagrant waterfowl in N America, with some birds originating in E Asia and spreading into AK and the West, and others probably crossing the Atlantic in fall from W Europe or Africa to the Caribbean and thence moving n. in spring into the East.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

140–165 cm (55–65")

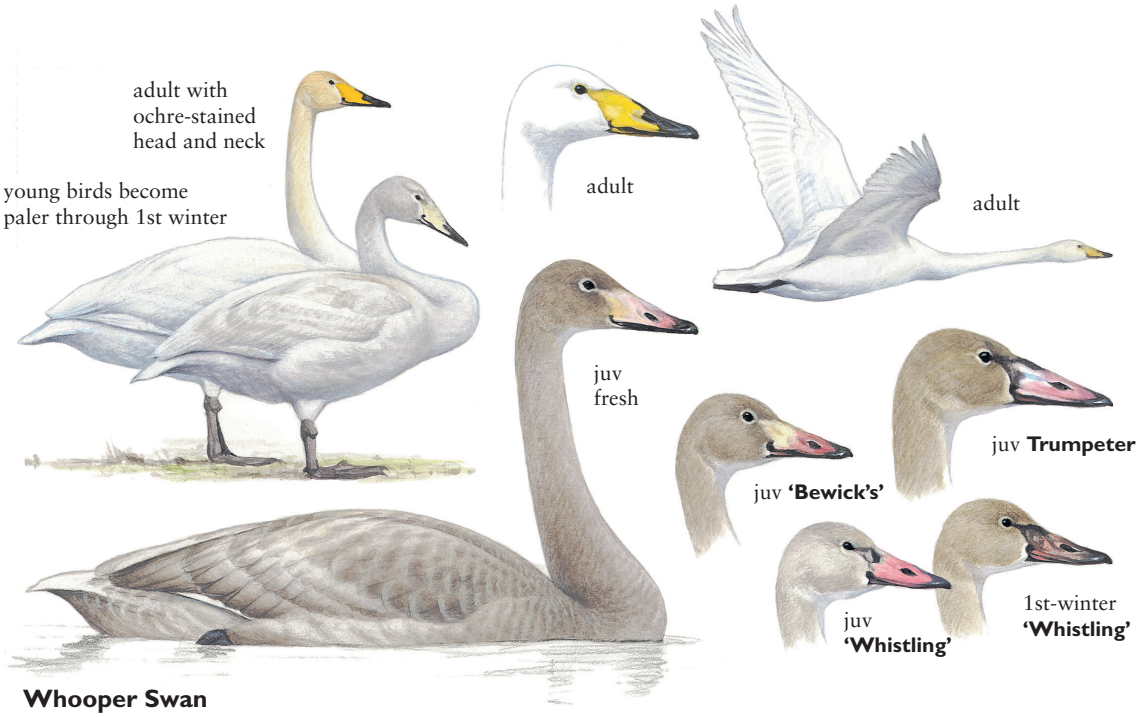
Summary: ***Alaska***: On w. and cen. Aleutians, uncommon in fall–spring (has bred); on Bering Sea islands and n. and w. mainland, very rare (mainly spring); exceptional in s-coastal AK. ***West***: Very rare in late fall–spring, s. to n. CA, e. to AB. ***East***: Scattered records, but none considered to be from wild populations.

Taxonomy: Monotypic.

Distribution and Status:

World: Breeds from Iceland across N Eurasia to ne. Russia (Kamchatka, e. Chukotka). Winters from W Europe e. locally to E Asia.

North America: ***Alaska***: Uncommon in w. and cen. Aleutians in fall–spring (late Sep–May, mainly Nov to mid-Apr); most records are of singles or family groups, max. 31 on Amchitka, 10 Apr 1970; nested on Attu, 1996 and 1997. Very rare in spring–early summer (May–Jun) on Bering Sea islands and w. mainland. Exceptional in



late fall (late Oct–Nov) in w. and s-coastal AK. ***West***: Very rare in winter (Nov to mid-Mar), with about 15 records (exact number confused by presumed returning and wandering birds) from Vancouver Island, BC, s. to cen. CA, and single records (late Nov–early Mar) e. to ID (2008; *NAB* 63:126) and WY (2003). Single summer records from Herschel Island, n. YT, 20 Jun–7 Jul 2006 (1st-year); Vancouver Is., 25–27 Jul 1996 (unknown provenance, rejected on grounds of origin by provincial committee; Davidson 1999). ***East***: Scattered records throughout the year, s. to NC and FL, and w. to IA and MN, but none considered to be from wild populations (see McEneaney 2004).

Comments: There has been lengthy debate over the wildness of Whooper Swans in N America (see summary by McEneaney 2004). Birds in the West, particularly ones associated with swans from high-latitude breeding ranges, are now generally considered wild. Whooper Swan populations on the Japanese wintering grounds have increased since the 1980s (Brazil 2003) and records from AK and the West appear to have increased in tandem.

Birds from the Great Plains and eastward are problematic. Whooper Swans have been known to escape or be released from captivity in MN, NY, MA, and NH, in some cases with small, temporary breeding populations becoming established (McEneaney 2004). On the other hand, the species is a common breeder in Iceland, arriving from its British wintering grounds in early Mar (some overwinter in Iceland) and returning there when its breeding waters freeze. Since 1950, there have been about 15 records from e. Greenland, indicating a degree of wandering. However, as yet there are no records of Whooper Swan from NL or NS, often the first port for many overshoots from Iceland and Greenland.

Field Identification: Very large swan with big, long, wedge-shaped bill; similar in size and shape to Trumpeter Swan, its New World counterpart.

Similar Species: ***Trumpeter Swan*** similar in size and shape but adult has black bill, lacking extensive yellow base to bill. Juv/1st-winter Trumpeter has dark lores and base to bill.

Tundra Swan smaller overall and shorter necked; adult of Eurasian ssp ('Bewick's Swan') has smaller and usually rounded yellow patch at base of bill; juv/1st-winter has smaller, dirty, whitish area at base of bill than Whooper, mirroring adult pattern. Juv/1st-winter of N American ssp ('Whistling Swan') has dark or dusky lores.

Hybrids between Whooper Swan and Tundra Swan may occur in the wild (bonded pairs have been seen in AK and possible hybrids in CA), and Whooper and Trumpeter have been hybridized in captivity in N America, and released (McEneaney 2004); the characters of such birds remain undocumented, but the possibility of a hybrid should be considered for any atypical Whooper Swan.

Age/Sex/Season: Ages differ, with adult appearance attained at about 1 year; sexes similar; no seasonal variation. Complete prebasic molt occurs late summer–fall (wing molt synchronous) but some molting may occur year-round; partial preformative molt occurs fall–spring. ***Adult*** plumage pure white (neck especially can be stained brownish to orange); bill largely yellow with black distal portions. ***1st-year***: Juv (Aug–Oct) dusky overall, becoming paler over 1st winter and spring through fading and protracted preformative molt. Attains white plumage by complete 2nd-prebasic molt at about 1 year of age. Juv bill pattern mirrors adult, but dirty whitish to pink where adult is yellow and black; by 1st summer resembles adult but paler yellow.

Habitat and Behavior: Similar to Trumpeter and Whistling swans, with which, in the Lower 48 states, Whooper is usually found. Adult has rather strident, bugling, or trumpeting calls, lacking the slightly nasal or muffled quality of Trumpeter Swan and distinct from the hollow, hooting quality of Tundra Swan.

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE *Anser serrirostris*

78–89 cm (30.5–35")

Summary: Uncertain due to species confusion with Taiga Bean Goose (see Taxonomy, below). ***Alaska***: Presumed rare in spring on w. Aleutians, very rare in spring on cen. Aleutians and Bering Sea islands. No certain fall records. ***Elsewhere***: fall records from YT (1999) and QC (1982).

Taxonomy: Monotypic (following Sangster & Oreel 1996), but size increases from w. to e. Smaller w. populations have slightly smaller bill (with less pronounced deep base) and sometimes treated as ssp *rossicus*, with e. populations being nominate *serrirostris*.

Bean Goose was split by AOU in 2007 into Tundra Bean Goose *A. serrirostris* and Taiga Bean Goose *A. fabilis* (*Auk* 124:1109–1115).

Distribution and Status:

World: Breeds tundra zone of Russia, e. to e. Chukotka. Winters locally from W Europe e. to Japan.

North America: ***Alaska***: Gibson & Byrd (2007) list all records of bean geese from the Aleutians as being *serrirostris* (i.e., Tundra Bean Goose), but in hindsight many sight records are best considered as 'bean goose sp.' (Gibson et al. 2008). Specimens of Tundra Bean Goose exist from cen. Aleutians, Pribilofs, and St. Lawrence, and the species is presumed rare in spring (May to mid-Jun, exceptionally into Jul) on w. Aleutians, max 14 on Attu, 21 May 1979; and very rare in spring (May–early Jun) on cen. Aleutians and Bering Sea islands (Gibson et al. 2008). ***Elsewhere***: Exceptional in s. YT, 23–24 Oct 1999 (adult; Eckert 2000) and e. QC, 14–21 Oct 1982 (*AB* 37:159).

Comments: Presumed Tundra Bean Geese are drift-overshoots through the w. and cen. Aleutians in spring, and given their northern (tundra) breeding range they are the most likely species to reach St. Lawrence Island in spring. Taiga Bean Goose is thought to be much rarer in spring in the Aleutians, but it has been recorded. Both species have reached the Pribilofs, and 5 of the 7 N American records of bean geese outside of AK (in fall–winter) appear to pertain to Taiga. Both species are unspectacular and thus rare in waterfowl collections (B. Wilson 1985; Mlodinow 2004), suggesting that escapes are likely to be very rare.

Concerning unidentified bean geese, there is a spring record from mainland w. AK (9 Jun 1974), and fall records from Shemya (10 Sep 2002), St. Lawrence (7 Sep 2002) and with migrating geese in YT on 18 Oct 2010 (*NAB* 65:105), and e. cen. AB in 2007 (1st-year; date not given, *NAB* 62:97).

Remarkably, both species have occurred in QC, a Tundra in Oct 1982, and a Taiga in Oct 1987, but whether they came from w. or e. is unclear. While there were only 59 records of bean goose sp. from Iceland through 2006 (mainly Oct–Nov with a smaller peak in Apr–May), the QC specimen was identified as ssp *rossicus*, implying an origin in W Eurasia.

Field Identification: Large 'gray goose' with mostly dark bill that has variable orange subterminal band.

Similar Species: Main concern is separation from ***Taiga Bean Goose***, and many birds may not be safely identified without good views and preferably some experience. Tundra Bean averages smaller and shorter-necked, with shorter legs and a relatively short, deep-based bill that typically has orange restricted to a subterminal band (and thus may recall Pink-footed Goose