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Notes

Reactions of Goldeneyes to boating Until 1966 Chasewater (Cannock Reservoir), Staffordshire, held fewer than ten wintering Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*. In subsequent winters higher numbers have been recorded. Although the reasons for this increase are unknown, the flocks are subject to a great deal of disturbance which may be inhibiting further increase; numbers fluctuate markedly from day to day and, particularly at weekends, Goldeneyes are sometimes entirely absent (at least in afternoons). Other waters often have an increase in late winter and early spring but this is not evident at Chasewater, and in the winter of 1974/75 the totals from late January were much lower than in December, almost certainly because of the increased frequency of midweek boating. Powerboating, water-skiing and sailing take place almost every winter weekend and the former activities are becoming more and more common on weekdays; the whole of the reservoir surface is used, except for a small pool at the northern end which is separated by a narrow causeway and on which Goldeneyes are rarely seen.

Repeated observations have shown that Goldeneyes often fly when people on the shore approach closer than 100 or 200 metres, but invariably settle again elsewhere on the water. A single sailing dinghy, however, may be sufficient to cause over 60 Goldeneyes to take flight and most to leave altogether within a few minutes, the remaining birds flying up each time the boat approaches to within 350-400 metres and generally leaving within an hour. A powerboat causes virtually instantaneous flight as soon as it appears on the water, the majority of birds leaving, and, if it traverses the length of the reservoir, all the rest leaving within a few minutes.

On 4th December 1974, 38 Goldeneyes undisturbed 100 metres offshore suddenly took flight together and flew right away out of the area when a powerboat had travelled barely 10 metres out from the jetty (and was still 550 metres from the birds). In the strong wind it was inaudible to me and difficult to see against the sun, but the Goldeneyes had reacted immediately to it, as on many other occasions. There was no sign of any other possible cause of their sudden, simultaneous departure. On 28th January 1975, I drove to the lakeside car park and Goldeneyes 200-250 metres offshore became alert for a few seconds; other cars moving past or stopping caused momentary anxiety. Then two cars, both towing powerboats, drove past without stopping and the closest birds, and a large group at about 350 metres, took flight, apparently reacting to the sight of the boats even without the sound. When one boat emerged slowly on to the water shortly afterwards, 28 Goldeneyes fully 700 metres away flew off before it had travelled 30 metres, and eventually

all 55 birds present (except for one or two very harassed individuals) left. This apparent reaction to powerboats on the shore has been repeated on several occasions.

Early in the winter of 1974/75 there seemed to be a more rapid return after disturbance than in previous years, when a whole week was often necessary for all displaced birds to return, but from late January 1975 the increasing frequency of boating meant that numbers did not regain their former levels at all; some birds perhaps return sooner but generally they do not react any less strongly with increasing experience of the boats.

Clearly the presence of Goldeneyes at Chasewater depends on the availability of a second, 'refuge' water: flocks have been watched flying out of sight towards Blithfield Reservoir (15 km to the north), but numbers there have been inadequate to account for up to 60 displaced birds from Chasewater in addition to the regular flock. Chasewater must presumably be more attractive to Goldeneyes or else the 'refuge' water already holds as many as it can support, whereas it is likely that the potential maximum at Chasewater is rarely, if ever, reached.

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Glaucous and Iceland Gulls in the west midlands The increasing tendency of the commoner species of gull to winter inland has been well documented (see, for example, *Bird Study*, 1: 129-148; 14: 104-113). Most publications, however, still describe the Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* and the Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides* as exceptional inland, except in the London area. Recent experience in the west midlands, particularly at the larger Staffordshire reservoirs, indicates that both these species are in fact regular visitors to large inland gull roosts. Up to and including the winter of 1974/75, 65 Glaucous Gulls and 50 Iceland were recorded in the old counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire (including the now separate county of West Midlands), 83% of them since 1968/69. During the course of a single winter as many as eleven Glaucous

Table 1. Records of Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* and Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides* in the old counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire

Figures for the winter of 1974/75 are provisional

		WINTER										
		pre-1966	66/67	67/68	68/69	69/70	70/71	71/72	72/73	73/74	74/75	TOTALS
Glaucous Gull	adult	1	0	0	0	4	1	4	3	3	3	19
	immature	9	1	2	5	5	6	7	4	4	3	46
	TOTALS	10	1	2	5	9	7	11	7	7	6	65
Iceland Gull	adult	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	5	4	5	23
	immature	6	0	1	1	5	4	4	3	2	1	27
	TOTALS	6	0	1	1	7	7	8	8	6	6	50