

## Nesting Goldeneye in the Breamish Valley 2023

Fourteen breeding attempts occurred between April – June (the same as in 2022), 11 of which were successful (also the same as 2022). Although arguably an additional nesting attempt took place in a box that was subsequently taken over by a Tawny Owl; as two cold duck eggs were found when the box was cleaned out in September! This was the 'usual situation' of an owl taking possession of a box that it considered was its property; a situation we had sought to mitigate by erecting two additional boxes near this location at Hedgeley a few years ago. However, due to Storm Arwen damage these boxes were both lost and it's been impossible to replace them. A fascinating reversal of this '*usual situation*' occurred at another location west of the A697. Here a duck started nesting and laid 7 eggs; then an owl attempted a take-over (*and we even captured and ringed it*). Then the duck came back apparently chased the owl away and laid some more eggs and actually evicted one of the owls eggs! This female Goldeneye [FH79908] had first nested at this same location in 2022.

The first 'brood' of an incredible 18 ducklings was spotted out on the water at Branton on the 16/5/22. The only explanation for this large number is the merger of two broods into a creche under the supervision of a single female with a few attendant males. The responsible females were most likely a bird first ringed in 2019 and another ringed in 2021. The fact that one female seems to have quickly left the scene is a confirmation of something suggested by the Geo-logger studies; i.e., that some females leave this nesting area very soon after their brood is out on the water.

Details are:

West of A697 up the valley.  
Nests 11; Broods 10; Young 92.

Roddam/Calder  
All boxes were destroyed by Storm Arwen.

Hedgeley)  
Nests 3; Broods 1; Young 7.

Four brand new adults were ringed and eight retrapped. Of the retraps two had been first ringed back in 2017 and so are probably 8 yrs. old. Three clutches were not incubated; at least one having been the victim of egg dumping with 16 cold eggs being found in the box. The most intriguing find came in September when after some timber works were completed, we gained access to a box (*that we had been unable to check since Storm Arwen*). Here we found all the positive signs of recent occupation and a successful hatching.

This is still the only regular colony of Goldeneye Ducks in England & Wales.

Phil Hanmer  
Schedule One Holder for Goldeneye 24/9/23

(With attached pictures)

