

BUFFLEHEAD

Bucephala albeola

non-breeding visitor, occasional winterer

monotypic

Buffleheads occur in N America, breeding throughout Alaska and Canada and wintering S to n. Mexico (AOU 1998); vagrants have been recorded in Europe (Cramp and Simmons 1977); in the Pacific Basin it has occurred only in the Hawaiian Islands in small numbers during late fall and winter. Perhaps because it is easier to identify than other diving ducks it was noted and collected by earlier ornithologists (Rothschild 1900, Bryan 1901b, Perkins 1903); Henshaw (1902a) referred to it as "one of the commonest of the continental ducks". Compared to other ducks it shows little propensity to return to Hawaii, the majority of records involving first-year individuals in female-like plumage. Only 10 adult male Buffleheads have been noted, and most of these occurred on islands lacking records the previous winter. However, females returning to the North Shore of O'ahu each winter during 2009-2016 and to Moloka'i each winter 2011-2016 may have been returning birds.

Assuming few or no individuals return to winter, 35 individuals have been recorded in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*, from **Kure** (1, Nov 1968; Woodward 1972), **Midway** (17, 1965-2015; e.g., Grant and Petit 1981; USNM 599951, BPBM 184382; [HRBP](#) 0115, 0344-0345, 1348 published *E* 41:83), and **Laysan** (17, 1897-2009; e.g., Shaunisland 1899, Bailey 1956; USNM 240989). The high count was of 6 birds on Laysan 14-19 Nov 1990. The earliest fall record was for 2 Nov (1994, Laysan), and the latest spring record was for 3 Apr (1997, Midway).

A [minimum](#) of 192 Buffleheads have been recorded in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, from **Kaua'i** (23, 1974-2016), **O'ahu** (82, <1903-2016; [HRBP](#) 0401-0402, 5218-5219, 5308, 6009), **Moloka'i** (19, 1980-2016; *E* 59:83, 61:77), **Lana'i** (1, Lana'i Oxidation Ponds, 23 Jan 1996), **Maui** (36, 1894-2016), and **Hawai'i** (31, 1966-2016; e.g., [HRBP](#) 6117). A specimen from 1894 at BPBM (2223) was collected on Maui (Bryan 1901b) rather than O'ahu (Engilis et al. 2004), although Perkins (1903) lists the species for both islands. The high count was of 12, including two adult males, was observed near Kailua, O'ahu in Jan 1938 (Northwood 1940a). The next highest counts were of 6 at Aimakapa Pond, Hawai'i, in Dec 2016 ([HRBP](#) 6117) and Hanaei NWR, Kaua'i 28 Nov 2016, and of 5 near Kahuku, O'ahu, 20 January 1999, at Kealia Pond, Maui, 17 Jan 2008, and at the Ki'i Unit of JCNWR 10 Dec 2016. Statewide winter totals of 11 in 2003-2004 (*AB* 57:104) and 19 during Dec 2016 were notable. The earliest record of a fall arrival was from 2 Nov (1995, Kealia Pond NWR, Maui), and the latest spring record of a migrant was from 8 Apr (2010, Punamano Unit of JCNWR, O'ahu). There is a single record of over-summering Buffleheads, two first-year females observed at Kealia Pond NWR, Maui 20 May-1 Sep 2015 ([HRBP](#) 6021).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>