



145-01-1993

## KING EIDER

*Somateria spectabilis*

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: January 14 to 24, 1993

Weather: seen under all kinds of conditions and times of day.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN Spotting Scope from 25X to 50X

Viewing distance: minimum of approximately 200 feet.

Details of sighting and description: I have a habit of scanning distant birds first and then working my way in closer. I guess I always expect the best birds to be the most distant ones. While scanning a distant flock of **Common Goldeneye** (*Bucephala clangula*) several times in hopes of turning up a **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), I kept panning by a large dark duck in the foreground that I continually ignored. After finally giving up on the flock of goldeneye I focused in on this dark duck, which was less than 100 yards away from me. To my surprise I had been panning past a basic I King Eider.

The eider appeared quite large even though there were no other birds nearby at the time for comparison. The bird most closely resembled a **White-winged Scoter** (*Melanitta fusca*). The bill was orangish-pink at the base and became pale grayish near the tip. The fleshy base of the upper mandible extended up onto the face forming a blunt point. The sloping forehead flattened at the crown and gently curved around the back of the head, the shape that is more typical of **Surf Scoter** (*Melanitta perspicillata*) than White-winged Scoter. The entire head and thick stocky neck were dark brown. There was a distinctive pale eyering. The breast was pale brown or buff. The remainder of the bird appeared to be dark brown except for a pale brown patch at the rear of the flank. In good light the body appeared to be blotched with slightly paler brown areas being darkest on the scapulars. Occasionally it stood up on the water and flapped its wings showing the uniform dark brown upperside and white axillaries and wing coverts of the underside. When feeding it would lean forward and dive spreading its wings slightly when submersing. I also saw it in flight with a mixed flock of other divers and its large bulky size and slower wing beats were apparent next to the other birds. While studying the eider through my scope on January 18 another eider appeared in my field of view that looked identical to the other one. The only difference between the two was the original bird's breast was slightly darker. I watched the two birds and photographed them through my scope, but because of the low amount of light and the high power I used the images turned out dark. I did, however, take many photographs of the original bird that show the identifying plumage characteristics. When the birds were together they were several hundred yards away from me. I never saw the second eider again after that. See photographs.

I have seen many King Eider on Presque Isle in the past few years and all, but one other basic I eider, have been females.



Jerry McWilliams

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*)

Date of Sighting: 14 January 1993 to 24 January 1993

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Rick Wiltraut (P)

Date of Submission: 1993

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: YES Photo: YES Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas	X							
N. Pulcinella	X							
E. Kwater	X							
R. Ickes	X							
G. McWilliams	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
J. Skinner	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*J. C. Haas*

Date:

*2-23-94*