

King Eider

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: December 23

Time: 8:07 AM

Weather: Cloudy, wind west-southwest to 25 mph.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN Spotting Scope at 35X

Viewing distance: about 200 yards.

Details of sighting and description: I was conducting the waterbird count at Sunset Point and movement was almost non-existent. At 8:07 AM I saw a single dark duck moving west, but still quite a distance away. At first I suspected it was a scoter based upon the large dark appearance of the bird, but as it got closer I could see it had a pale collar reminiscent of a female Common Goldeneye. Though the light was not real good under the cloudy conditions and it was still early, I was able to observe the following field marks that identified it as a King Eider in basic I plumage. It had a large all dark brown blocky shaped head with a sloping forehead, but not the smooth even sloping forehead of a Surf or White-winged Scoter. It appeared to dip down about where the base of the bill began similar to the way it does in a Black Scoter. The bill was orange and it appeared to be small in relation to the head size. It had a relatively short stocky neck, the body was heavy, and the wings were all dark on the upperside and broad at the base. The wing linings were pale, especially at the base of the wings. The color of the upperside and underside of the body was dark gray-brown similar to an immature Surf Scoter. The bird showed a pale collar and upper breast, perhaps dingy gray or dull buff, but not white.

Head and bill shape was used to eliminate Common Eider. The relatively short bill and lack of long even sloping forehead is characteristic of King Eider.

It is worth noting that none of the field guides show King Eider males in early stages of basic I plumage. Nearly all of the basic I males I have seen, even a couple within 100 feet in good light, showed no white in the femoral tract area. All but one of the several immature males I have seen showed white breast and mantles as most field guides indicate for basic I birds. Most hatching year King Eiders show buff or pale brown chests and mantles at least for their first seven or eight months. Basic I King Eiders can look entirely dark gray-gray brown at a distance. However, all basic I males I have seen have at least the outer half of their bills orange.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: King Eider (Somateria spectabilis)

Date of Sighting: 23 December 2006 to 23 December 2006

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County : ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2006

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

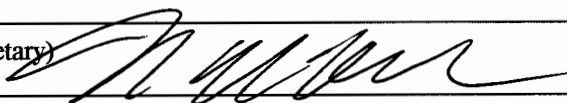
Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
J. Heller			X					
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

4/10/07