

149-01-1989

HARLEQUIN DUCK (Histrionicus histrionicus)

On April 2, 1989 at Beach 11 on Presque Isle State Park while searching for the Black-headed Gull that I had discovered the previous day I saw an all-dark duck which I identified as a ♀ Harlequin Duck. It was flying about 8 to 10 feet above the water in a southerly direction towards the north pier. I alerted the group of birders who were present, and Ed Kwater and Joyce Hoffman spotted the bird immediately. The light was good, with altocumulus clouds blocking out direct light from the sun. The bird was entirely dark on the upperside with only the lower breast and belly showing pale feathers. The shape and flight of the bird readily identified it as a diving duck. Surf Scoter (Melanitta perspicillata) and Black Scoter (Melanitta nigra) were eliminated as possibilities because this bird was smaller, and it did not have the typical sloping head profile of scoters. The neck was short and not thick like a scoter's, and the head appeared to peak near the front of the crown with a steep forehead angling abruptly at the small short bill forming a rough right angle. The white markings on the face could be seen, but I could not determine their exact shape or position with certainty looking through my spotting scope. The bird was viewed for less than a minute using a Bushnell Spacemaster 25X spotting scope at a distance of possibly 200 to 300 yards. The bird could not be re-located after searching in the area where it was thought to have gone.

Jerry McWilliams,



Description also submitted by Jerry McWilliams  
and published in PA Birds Vol 3 no. 2

PREPARED BY

DATE

Harlequin Duck, Presque Isle, Erie County, April 2nd 1989

Ed Kwaters

On April 2nd 1989, while looking for a Black-headed Gull from beach 11, Presque Isle I saw a female Harlequin Duck flying south towards the channel. The bird was spotted by Jerry McWilliams and he alerted the group of assembled birders. The bird was flying within a few feet of the water at a range of approximately 200 yards. It was slightly smaller than a Goldeneye and had a characteristic sea duck shape - thick body, relatively short, broad-based wings and short ~~neck~~ neck. It was noticeably smaller than any of the three scoter species and had a smaller head with a steep forehead and a much smaller bill.

The plumage was very dark, almost black including the upper & underwing surfaces, with a dirty, whitish patch on the belly. I noticed 2 white patches on the head, one just behind the base of the bill and a smaller one on the cheek.

The bird was observed for less than 2 minutes using x 10 binoculars and x 20 spotting scope.

Previous experience - one female on the Ohio River in Pittsburgh.

Record No.: 149-01-1989

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 2 of 2

Species: *Harlequin Duck*

Date of Sighting: 4-2-89

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams/Ed Kwater

Date of Submission: 1989

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater		X					
B. Haas		X					
F. Haas				X			
R. Leberman				X			
G. McWilliams		X					
S. Santner		X					
P. Schwalbe			X				
TOTALS		4	1	2			

DECISION

NOT ACCEPTED

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*B. Haas*

Date:

3-1-90

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of 2**

**Species: Harlequin Duck**

**Date of Sighting: 04/02/89**

**Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams**

**Date of Submission: 1989**

**Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater			X				
B. Haas		X					
F. Haas				X			
R. Leberman				X			
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
P. Schwalbe			X				
<b>TOTALS</b>		1	4	2			
<b>DECISION</b>							

**Comments:**

**Signature (Secretary):**

*B. Haas*

**Date:** 12-26-89