

149-02-1989

HARLEQUIN DUCK

On the morning of Friday, November 17, 1989 I was counting and identifying birds as they migrated past sunset point on Presque Isle State Park. I began observing at 7:30 AM and by 9:30 AM I had counted 1526 birds consisting mostly of waterfowl which included 6 (dark-winged) scoters too far away to identify to species, and 8 White-winged Scoters. It was at this time that an all dark duck appeared from the east flying in a westerly direction. As it approached, still several hundred yards out over the lake, my first thought was Surf or Black Scoter because of the all-dark plumage and lack of any white in the wings, but it was too small, with faster wing beats than either of the former species. When the bird was directly out in front of me I began to pay particular attention to the shape and flight behavior of the bird. Since it was still too far away to see any detail on the head, I had to rely on other characteristics to identify the duck. The flight was fast and direct and it never flew more than 5 or 6 feet off the water. The upper and underside of the bird was all dark brown except for a small pale patch on the lower belly and some white on the face (because of the distance between myself and the duck the exact location of white on the face could not be determined). Ruddy Duck was eliminated because Ruddy Ducks have much smaller and narrower wings with very rapid wing beats and chunky football-shaped bodies with short stocky necks. As the duck continued to fly by I also noted that the body was too slim to be a scoter and it had a relatively long tail. Scoters have short tails. As the bird was flying away I continued to study it. On several occasions when it banked and the sun shone on its upper wings I could clearly see the glossy blue secondaries. At that point I could identify the bird as an adult female Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). Males in all plumages show patches of white (at least on the sides of the breasts in first winter males) and first winter females lack the glossy blue secondaries.

Visibility was very good since I was standing between the sun and the bird. The wind was out of the west with gusts to 22 MPH. Most of the time I watched the duck I was looking through a Bushnell Spacemaster spotting scope with a 25X eyepiece. The scope was **mounted** securely on my car window. Approximate viewing time was less than 2 minutes.

Jerry McWilliams

Record No.: 149-02-1989

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # / of *1*

Species: *Harlequin Duck*
 Date of Sighting: *11/17/89*
 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				
TOTALS			5	2			

DECISION *Go to Second Round*

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

3-1-90