

149-01-1990

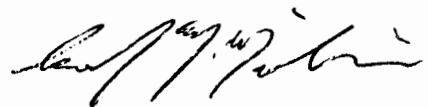
HARLEQUIN DUCK ♀  
(Histrionicus histrionicus)  
in Erie County, PA

While conducting a waterbird count at Sunset Point on Presque Isle State Park on November 11, 1990 at 7:40 AM, I saw a small dark duck possibly a little larger than a Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*). It approached from the northeast flying along the shoreline in a southwesterly direction which is the typical fall migrational path for waterfowl over Lake Erie. The duck flew very low, approximately 4 or 5 feet above the surface of the water. As the duck flew past me I noted the following characteristics. The entire bird was very dark brown, looking almost black except for a very slight pale area on the lower breast. The side of the head showed extensive white areas which were clearly defined as a small round patch directly behind the eye and two diffuse patches, one above the other, in front of the eye almost joining together as one large crescent shaped patch. The shape of the duck was quite distinctive and could be easily distinguished from the similar Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) by the following characteristics: The bill was small much like a Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) with a steep forehead unlike the long sloping forehead of the Surf Scoter. The duck was slimmer than a scoter. A scoter is football-shaped giving it a pot-bellied look. The tail was noticeably long unlike scoters' tails, which are short. The head was held slightly above the body rather than level with the body like a scoter. Incidentally, I did see 4 Surf Scoters fly past Sunset Point later that morning.

Total viewing time was approximately one minute or less at a distance of 100 to 150 yards at its closest approach. Viewing conditions were good under mostly cloudy skies (*cumulostratus*). The wind was northwesterly at 25 MPH, gusting to 30 MPH. Optics used were a 10 X 40 Zeiss Binocular and 25X Bushnell Spotting Scope. The latter was used during most of the viewing time.

This is the 5th female Harlequin Duck I have seen in PA, 2 of which I have studied at distances as close as 50 feet resting on the water.

Jerry McWilliams



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # of

Species: **Harlequin Duck**

Date of Sighting: **November 11, 1990**

Observer(s): **Jerry McWilliams**

Date of Submission: **1990**

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			6	1			
DECISION			X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*B. Haas*

Date:

*3-24-91*