

149-01-2002

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)

Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, PA

February 2, 2002

by Mike Fialkovich

This bird was reported a few days earlier in the channel between Erie Bay and Lake Erie in Presque Isle State Park. I observed the bird from the north side of the channel as it swam through it. The bird was fairly close and I had good views through my Leica spotting scope at 20 to 60 power.

I also saw the bird make several dives to feed. As it submerged, it flicked its wings in the same way scoters and Long-tailed Ducks do when they dive. I observed the bird for approximately 10 minutes and then it flew to the bay side of the channel.

DESCRIPTON:

Small duck, slightly larger than a Bufflehead.

The bird was dark brownish/black overall, with a small dark bill. The forehead was rather steep from the bill to the crown.

The distinguishing features were on the head. The head was dark brownish/black with a round white spot behind the eye. There was a (roughly) teardrop shaped white spot between the eye and the bill. From this spot, a thin white line ran up the face in front of the eye and over the eye onto the side of the head.

The white lines extending over the eyes were duller than the white in the spots on the head, but could be seen well from the side when the bird was at close range. This facial pattern was more pronounced when the bird faced me due to the viewing angle.

A dull white stripe was also visible on the side of the upper breast (see sketch).

This facial pattern along with the white stripe on the side indicated to me this was a male. The dull color of these markings, along with the brownish/black body color indicated to me this individual was immature.

IMMATURE MALE HARLEQUIN DUCK

Sketch of head and forebody showing detail of the spotting and lines. Note the teardrop shaped spot between the eye and the bill, and the extension of a line from this spot in front of, and over the eye. Also note the dull vertical white stripe on the side of the breast.

Harlequin Duck Description, Page 2

ELIMINATION OF SIMILAR SPECIES

Female/immature scoters - scoters are larger birds, and the white spots in the face are not as pronounced as on this bird. The spots are less well defined compared to the spots on a harlequin duck. The spots on scoters are not round; the spot behind the eye on the harlequin was almost perfectly round. Immature/female Black and Surf Scoters show a contrasting dark cap on top of the head; this bird did not show a contrasting cap. In addition, female/immature Black Scoters don't have white spots on the face, they have a pale cheek.

A White-winged Scoter would show white in the secondaries which would have been visible at the range I observed the harlequin duck. When the bird dove, the wing flick would have revealed white also.

All scoters have larger bills compared to the small stubby bill of a harlequin.

Female Bufflehead and Ring-necked Duck - the most likely bird to confuse this species with would be a female Bufflehead. Female Buffleheads have a white spot behind the eye, but this spot is not round, it is elongated, and they lack white between the eye and bill. Female Buffleheads are also lighter colored on the sides of the body. This bird was all dark. Female Ring-necked Ducks are dark brown, but still lighter than harlequins and do not show any obvious, well defined white spots on the face. The face pattern on female Ring-necked Ducks is much subtler.

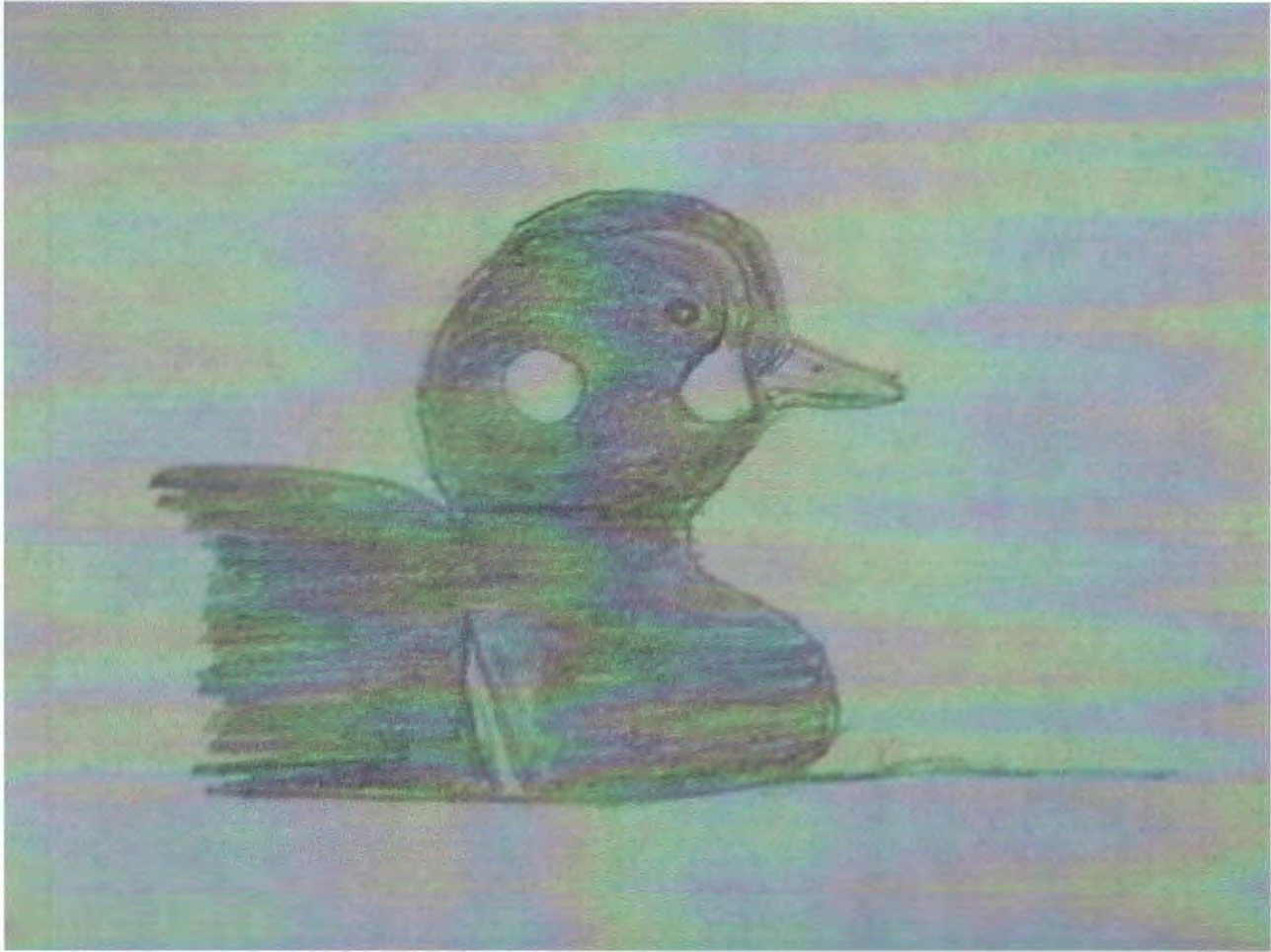
Female Scaup: female scaup are dark brownish birds with white on the face, however the white is confined to the base of the bill. Scaup are larger with larger bills.

Common Goldeneye - immature male Common Goldeneyes have a dull white spot between the eye and bill, but lack the continuation of lines up to the top of the head and never show a spot behind the eye. They also show whitish along the sides, unlike the harlequin which was dark along the sides. Goldeneyes have a "puffier" head shape.

EXPERIENCE

I have seen male and female Harlequin Ducks in New Jersey and two females at Presque Isle on two different occasions.

Mike Fialkovich
805 Beulah Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
412-731-3581
mpfial@sgi.net



149-01-2002

Harlequin Duck
Histrionicus histrionicus

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: February 7, 2002

Time: 7:50 to 8:15 AM and 9:30 to 10:20 AM

Weather: mostly clear, wind SW to about 15 mph

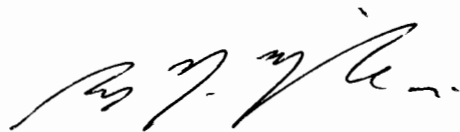
Viewing conditions: very good.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

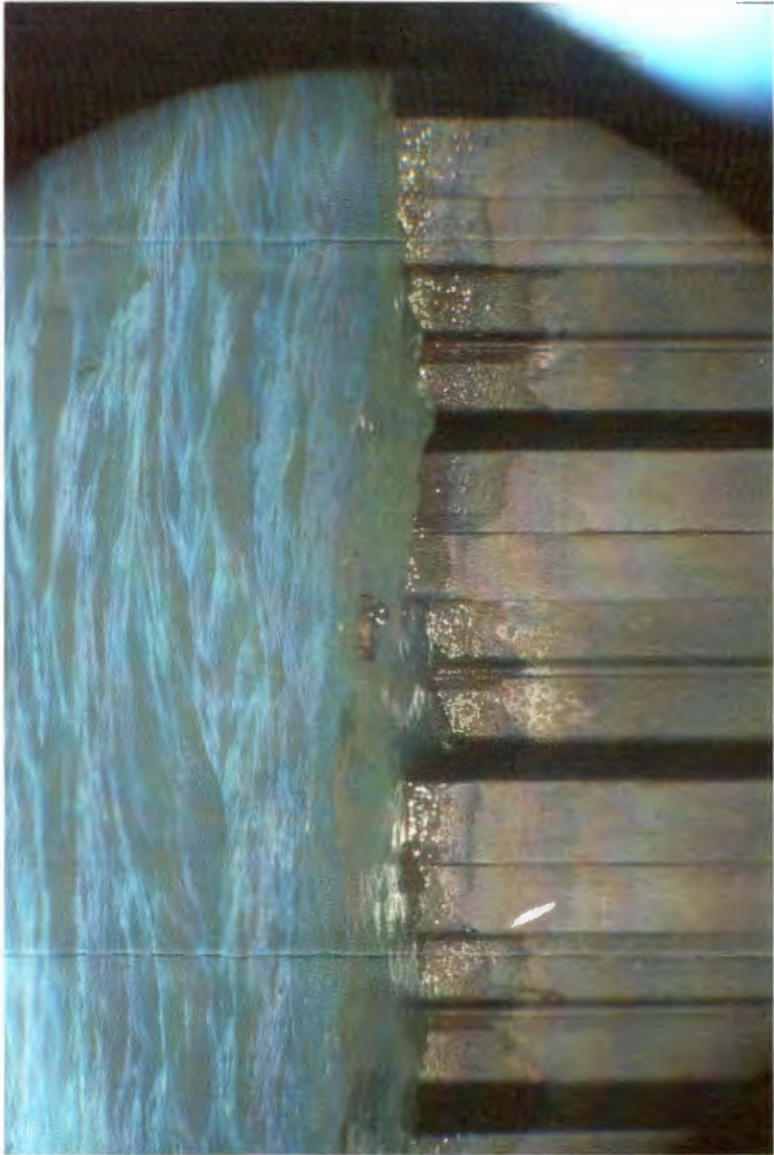
Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Tsn 4 Kowa scope at 30X

Details of sighting and description: An immature male Harlequin Duck was reported about two weeks ago by Dick Bollinger. After two after-work attempts to find the bird I was unsuccessful and then this morning Ben Coulter and I spotted the bird off the south pier where it was near the stern of the Richard Reiss ship. The all dark brown plumage, clear round white patch behind the ear, white crescent between the eye and the grayish bill identified the bird. The sun was not directly on the bird so it appeared to be uniform brown. When it turned I could see a thin white vertical bar on the side of the breast in front of the folded wing. After watching it for about 30 minutes it swam in front of the bow of the ship and did not appear again until 9:30. Pat Howell, Linda, and Jean Joyce had arrived about 10 or 15 minutes after we last saw the bird. After waiting around for awhile for the Harlequin Duck to show again, but didn't, we went to the foot of East Avenue and saw the Red-necked Grebe. We checked again at the south pier at 9:30 and immediately after getting out of the cars I saw the duck just off the pier in front of us. I took several photographs of the Harlequin as it swam across to the north side of the channel and rested very close to the north wall. The light was better now and we began to see things on the duck we didn't see before. Its head was a dingy gray not brown as it had appeared before. The gray covered the entire head, with the crown being the darkest, and the gray continued down onto the mantle and some scapulars as well as down the side of the breast surrounding the white vertical bar. The lower flanks were a warm brown, but it looked as if there were some reddish feathers growing in this area. There was a faint vertical white bar on the sides of the neck behind and below the round white spot. the breast had some warm brown barring and the underside of the bird appeared to pale with some barring or mottling. The tertials showed no white as Ben had thought when he saw it last weekend.

I have seen this species along the Atlantic Coast in New Jersey and on the Pacific Coast in Washington as well as seven of the eleven birds that have been recorded in Erie County.



149-01-2002



HARLEQUIN DUCK IMM. ♂
FEB. 7, 2002
PESQUE ISLE STATE PARK
BAIE CO., PA
JERRY McWILLIAMS

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

149-01-2002

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary
Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
210 Welcome Ave.
Norwood, PA 19074.
nickpul@bellatlantic.net

SPECIES (common and scientific name) HARLEQUIN DUCK - HISTRIONICUS HISTRIONICUS
Subspecies (if known) N/A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS 1 SEX(ES) MALE

AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g. immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable): FIRST YEAR MALE

DATE OF OBSERVATION 02/02/02 TIME 9:30^{ish}

LOCATION (city, borough, township) Presque Isle STATE PARK, ERIE COUNTY

EXACT SITE (e.g. name of park, lake, road) BAY CHANNEL

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name BOB MACHESNEY
Address 105 LINDLEY CANE
City PITTSBURGH State PA ZIP 15237
e-mail (optional) REMACH@AOL.COM phone (optional) 412-366-7869

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):

JOYCE HOFFMAN, MIKE FIALKOVICH, DAVE WILTON, BEN COULTER

HABITAT (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details) CHANNEL BETWEEN LAKE ERIE & ERIE BAY

DISTANCE TO BIRD BIRD WAS AGAINST OPPOSITE WALL ~ 150 FEET AWAY.

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you) VARIABLE, ONE MOMENT SNOW SQUALLS, THEN SOME SUN. WE WERE FACING SUN. DUCK WAS IN THE SHADOW OF THE SEAWALL.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED 10 X40 BINOS & VARIOUS, PRICEY SCOPES TO 60 POWER.

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed - size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): SMALL BLACK DUCK - SIZE OF WOOD DUCK. NO OTHER DUCKS WERE PRESENT IN CHANNEL FOR COMPARISON. SMALL DIVING DUCK WITH ROUNDED HEAD, STEEP FOREHEAD AND ~~SMALL~~ SMALL BILL, WHITE PATCH IN FRONT OF EYE, STARTING AT BOTTOM OF BILL, EXTENDING TO ABOVE THE EYE. IT HAD A WHITE SPOT AT THE "EAR" LOCATION. SMALL, THIN WHITE SHOULDER PATCH. NO COLORATION IN WINGS WHEN IT FLEW THE LENGTH OF THE SEAWALL. ITS BACK, SIDES & TAIL ALL ~~APPEARED~~ APPEARED TO BE VERY DARK.

(Please use an additional page if necessary.)

BEHAVIOR (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing) IT SLOWLY SWAM RIGHT TO LEFT, DIVING OCCASIONALLY FOR ABOUT 15 SECONDS. AT END OF SEAWALL FLEW TO RIGHT TO FAR END OF SEAWALL BY "REISS" SHIP.

VOCALIZATIONS

NONE

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:

Photograph _____ Video recording _____ Audio recording _____ Drawing _____

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

e-mail (optional) _____ phone (optional) _____

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition _____

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known _____

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others) THE ONLY OTHER DUCKS THAT COULD BE MISTAKEN FOR, WITH THE SIMILAR WHITE SPOTS ON HEAD, WOULD BE THE SCOTER + WHITE-WINGED SCOTER. THEIR BILLS ARE MUCH LARGER + BULKIER THAN THE HANLEQUIN. THE WHITE-WINGED SCOTER SHOWS WHITE IN THE WINGS. THE HANLEQUIN DID NOT SHOW ANY WHITE IN THE WING.

DISCUSSION – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES

NO EXPERIENCE WITH HANLEQUIN DUCK. VERY FAMILIAR WITH SCOTERS + DIVING DUCKS.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? (why or why not) I AM POSITIVE OF THE I.D. BECAUSE OF THE WHITE MARKINGS ON HEAD, BILL SIZE, FOREHEAD SHAPE + WING PATTERN.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation

After observation SIBLEY'S GUIDE TO BIRDS, WATERFOWL by MARGE + BENN, AND DUCKS, GESE + SWANS OF NORTH AMERICA by BELLROSE.

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 02-04-02

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER Robert Moehoney

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)

Date of Sighting: 2 February 2002 to 7 February 2002

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Bob Machesney, Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Bob Machesney, Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

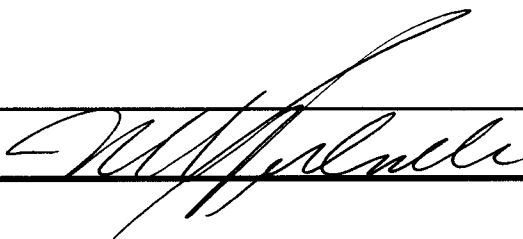
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

1/9/03