

149-01-2011

Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Sunset Point, Presque Isle S.P., Erie, Pa.

Date: November 4, 2011

Time: about 8:45 AM

Weather: Partly cloudy, wind NE to 15 mph, temp. 40 F

Viewing distance: about 150 yards

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 at 30 X

Details: I was conducting the waterbird count at Sunset Point with assistance from Shannon Thompson, Dave Wilton, and Richard Nuggent. I was scanning the distant horizon for waterfowl when Shannon said to me something like, "what are these two dark birds flying east toward breakwater # 58." By the time I swung my scope in that direction they were already half way past the breakwater. I immediately recognized the ducks as female Harlequin Ducks. I only had them in my scope for a couple of seconds or so before they disappeared behind the sand dune that was between me and the lake.

Viewing conditions were good and I was able to see the following characteristics on this very distinctive bird: There was full sun on the birds, so I could clearly see the two pale patches on the face. The front patch behind the bill was large and smudgy and the one behind the eye was noticeably smaller, round, and brighter than the patch behind the bill. The birds were chunky and entirely chocolate brown including the wings with the belly being pale. Their necks were thick. Their heads were round and their foreheads were steep with a small dark bill. Their tails were relatively long and all brown. Female Harlequins look similar to female Surf Scoters, but Surf Scoters have shorter tails shallower foreheads that taper down to thick based large bills, giving the head a long sloping profile. The pale patches on the sides of the head on Surf Scoter are larger with the back patch being much larger than the vertical front patch and not small and perfectly round as in the back patch of Harlequin Duck. Also the front patch is as bright as the back patch on Surf Scoter.

I have seen and photographed several female Harlequins on Presque Isle as well as along the east and west coast of the United States.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Date of Sighting: 4 November 2011 to 4 November 2011

County : ERIE

Location : PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams, Shannon Thompson, Dave Wilton, Richard Nugent

Date of Submission: 2011

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	
D. DeReamus			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson			X					
B. Coulter			X					
R. Koury			X					
D. Weber			X					
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary) Nick Pulcinella

Date: 4/25/12