

1951-01-2002

# King/Common Eider

*Somateria spectabilis/mollissima*

1951-01-2002

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: Dec. 10, 2002

Time: 7:45 AM

Weather: Clear, southwest wind to less than 10 mph, waves about four feet.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Viewing conditions: good

Viewing distance: approximately 500 yards

Optics: TSN 4 Kowa scope at 35X

Description: Red-breasted Merganser movement had been heavy since daylight at Sunset Point while I was conducting my waterbird count. As I carefully scanned the flocks of merganser I would occasionally catch a single White-winged Scoter among them. In the past I had seen single eiders mixed in with large groups of Red-breasted Mergansers moving past Sunset Point at least a couple of times, so I was on the alert for this to occur again. At 7:45 a flock of about 75 Red-breasted Mergansers flying east contained a noticeably larger and darker bird among them. As the flock passed by Sunset Point the dark bird was at its closest approach to shore at which time I was able to observe the following field marks. The entire bird was dark brown, like that of an immature female White-winged Scoter, including its upperwings. The undersides of the primaries and secondaries were brown and the underwing coverts were dirty white. The axillaries were bright white standing out quite well in contrast to the darkness of the rest of the bird. The neck and head were a slightly paler brown showing some contrast between the base of its neck and its upper breast. The shape of the bird was also quite distinctive. Its body was bulky with a short all dark tail and the wings were particularly broad at the base. The neck was short and thick, only slightly thinner than the head. The bill appeared all dark. Because of the distance of viewing, details could not be detected, like the barring on the body and the exact shape of the sloping head. American Black Duck was immediately ruled out because their plumage is blackish showing flashing white underwing coverts and silvery undersides to the primaries and secondaries. There is also greater contrast between the pale brown neck and the blackish breast. American Black Ducks have thinner necks than eiders making their rounded head shape more distinctive. In addition, Black ducks have greenish-yellow bills.

In light of the fact that Ohio had recorded a Common Eider last month, I opted to refrain from giving it a specific species. Having said that, the number of past confirmed king Eider records in Erie County would certainly lend one to believe that it was most likely a King Eider.

I have found and identified most of the modern records of King Eider in Pennsylvania and have some experience with them on the East Coast. I have seen far more Common Eiders than King Eiders on the East Coast. I also helped verify the recent female Common Eider that was found near Cleveland, Ohio.



**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: King/Common Eider (Somateria spectabilis/mollissima)

Date of Sighting: 10 December 2002 to 10 December 2002

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County : ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

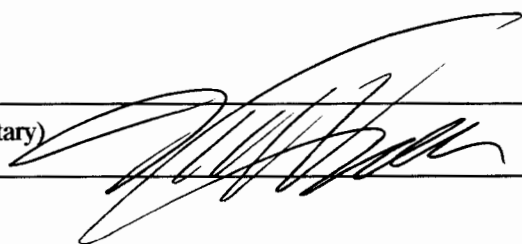
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
G. Armistead			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman								
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			6					
DECISION			X					

Comments: C/O

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

4/1/04