

KING/COMMON EIDER

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Sunset Point at Presque Isle State Park, Erie Co., Pa.

Date: December 13, 2017

Time: 7:30 AM

Weather: Cloudy, wind WNW to 25 mph, temp. 23 F

Distance from viewer: approximately 300 yards

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 with variable objective lens set at 35X

Description: One female eider with five Red-breasted Mergansers flew west past Sunset Point just offshore near the breakwaters. The bird was noticeably larger and heavier than the mergansers, shaped most like a large White-winged Scoter. It was entirely dark brown and heavily barred with a thick slightly lighter brown neck. The head was heavy with a sloping forehead, the underwing linings were dirty white or gray. All three species of scoters were recorded as well throughout the morning. The coal black colored scoters and smaller size was distinctively different than the more robust brown-colored eider. I am familiar with eider identification, since I observe them nearly annually off Sunset Point, though they are very rare with usually only one sighting per year. I have seen many King Eiders and also unidentified females off Sunset Point since 1987. I am familiar with both species along the Atlantic coast in winter as well.