

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2014-02-05 19:19:01
Observer's Name	Jacob Cramer
E-mail	jake@cramerdesign.com
Phone	7176798962
Observer's Address	Street Address: 38 Berwyn Park City: Lebanon State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 17042 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Kevin Cramer
Species (Common Name)	King Eider
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
Number of individuals	3
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult male
Observation Date and Time	02-04-2014 5:00 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Not yet (please do, eBird is great!)
County	Lebanon
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Lebanon city
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Quittapahilla Wetlands
GPS coordinates of sighting	40°20'27.13"N 76°23'47.79"W
Habitat	Shallow marsh with a mid-sized stream flowing through it
Distance to bird	approx. 20 yards
Viewing conditions	clear day
Optical equipment used	none
Description	My father and I were driving past the wetlands, when I noticed a few odd looking ducks just beyond the bridge that looked much different from what I usually see there. I asked my father to circle back around slowly so I could get another look at them. From about 20 yards away, I saw 2 or 3 large, very dark ducks, with light heads, conspicuously white

breasts and necks, and an orange "lump" above the bill. Intermingled with these birds were what I now suspect were females, distinguished from the surrounding mallards by their size and overall profile. I knew at the time that it was something out of the ordinary, but we were already late for an engagement at the time, so he refused to make another loop just for some ducks. Had I known at the time just how rare they are, I could have easily gotten pictures.

I returned to the quitty wetlands this morning, but the eiders were nowhere to be found. I still took pictures of the waterfowl that were there, hoping that they might have been partially obscured, but when I dumped the pictures and examined them, the eiders weren't there. Hopefully they'll turn up some place else.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

The ducks I observed were not actively feeding, and were sitting on top of the water

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Male king eiders are striking and unmistakable. No similar species are present in my area.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

I come from a herpetological background. Population distribution databases that I contribute to are dependent on photographs. In other words, "pics or it didn't happen." I was initially reluctant to submit a report without any substantial evidence, worrying that no one would believe an anecdotal report from someone unknown in the birding community. However, I have spent many, many hours outdoors in the pursuit of Pennsylvania's herpetofauna, and through these endeavors I have become familiar with many aspects of ecology and biology within the state, including a basic understanding of ornithology.

My father, who knows next to nothing about birds, also observed these eiders. After observing them, I told him to describe one of the birds to me, focusing on differentiating characteristics. He described it as "a large, black duck with a light head and front, horizontal white bar along its side, and a large orange 'growth' above its beak." The fact that he, someone unfamiliar with birds, much less very rare birds, corroborated these unique characteristics eliminates bias from my report. Also, while not overly knowledgeable about Pennsylvania's birds, my father is a professional photographer, avid outdoorsman, and former color technician for a printing company.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes. Even though I can't provide photographic evidence, I saw the birds very clearly, and got a good look at their diagnostic features.

After

Ebird, Lycoming county audubon society, sibley bird guide

Click to edit

PORC-webform00189