

KING EIDER

Somateria spectabilis

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Walnut Creek access, Fairview Twp.

Date: December 6, 2015

Time: 8:30 AM

Weather: Cloudy, light south wind, temp. 29 F

Distance from viewer: approximately ¼ mile

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

Description: While conducting the waterbird count I spotted a first cycle male King Eider among a flock of nine Red-breasted Mergansers moving west low over the water. I immediately grabbed my camera and got a few quick snaps before it flew past. The images are not that great and barely identifiable. It was quite robust with a relatively short stocky neck and had a blocky shaped head without a strong sloping forehead. The bill was orange and the rest of the head and neck were all dark. The breast was dirty buff and the remainder of the bird was sooty brown, except the under wing linings which were dirty white. The upper wings were unmarked sooty brown as the rest of the plumage. Common Eider was ruled out because the head shape was too steep in the front and not gradually sloping. Both dark-winged scoters were ruled out because of size, orange bill, and pale chest. This is the second first cycle male King Eider I have seen on my waterbird counts this season. Many of the King Eiders I have seen in the past on Lake Erie have been in Red-breasted Merganser flocks.