

Harlequin Duck
31 Oct 1976
Big Creek Lake, Polk Co., IA
Jack Musgrove
Musgrove and Musgrove 1977, P-0138

Record Number: 81-MB
Classification: A-S

SPECIMEN

State Historical Museum, Des Moines

PHOTOGRAPH

J. J. Dinsmore, March 1984, P-0138

REFERENCE

Musgrove, J.W., and M.R. Musgrove. 1977. Waterfowl in Iowa, 5th Edition. State Conservation Commission, Des Moines. p 63, 66.

VOTE (1981): 5-I, 1-III, I-IV

I, If we can find it, otherwise II.

IV, Based on Musgrove's ability and specimen in hand.

I, I assume specimen exists.

I, skin should be available.

I, in state collection?

III, I-S if specimen extant. Otherwise III on Musgrove's reputation.

81-MB

Harlequin Duck

Musgrove, J. W. and Musgrove, M. R. 1977. Waterfowl in Iowa 5th ed. State Conservation Commission, Des Moines. pp 63, 66

HARLEQUIN DUCK

Histrionicus histrionicus (LINNAEUS)

PLATE ON PAGE 71

Length: 15 to 17 inches

Weight: 1 1/4 to 2 pounds

DESCRIPTION: *Adult male*—Body and head slate-gray with bluish tint, marked with black and white in front of the wings, around the neck and on the back and head. Sides rich chestnut-red with a distinct stripe of this color on each side of the head above the eye. Crown dark with a white patch running from the base of the bill up over the eye to the nape. Tail long and black, feathers pointed. Speculum metallic blue-black. Iris brown. Bill bluish. Feet gray.

Male in eclipse plumage—Slate-gray with head and neck considerably darker. White spot on each side of head. Dull white spot at base of bill as in full plumage. The flightless period is the latter part of August. Full plumage is regained early in October.

Juvenile male—Similar to female but grayer on the breast. Feet olive.

Female—Grayish-brown, lighter on the under parts. Three white spots on each side of head. Tail rather long and dark-colored. Iris brown. Bill small, gray. Feet gray. There are no distinctive marks on the wings.

FIELD MARKS: Among all ducks, the male harlequin can be identified by its odd color pattern. In the female and juvenile male a distinct white spot behind the eye on the side of the head and the bird's small bill are diagnostic.

CALL: Gabbling note; a whistle similar to the wood duck.

MIGRATIONS: A rare and accidental straggler in Iowa.

BREEDING: *Range*—Western North America, east in northwestern Canada to the Mackenzie Valley; also eastern Canada and Greenland. *Nest*—Usually on the ground near water, but occasionally in hollow trees. *Eggs*—5 to 8, greenish-buff, laid in June. *Downy young*—Upper parts dark blackish-brown, under parts white. Top and back of head, black; cheeks and throat, white. Small white spot in front of eye; white spot behind wing; narrow white crescent in front of tail.

WINTER RANGE: Mainly on the seacoasts, not far from the southern parts of its breeding range.

FOOD: Insects, larvae, snails, crustacea, and small fish; occasionally some vegetable food.

IOWA STATUS: The harlequin duck is accidental in Iowa, being a rare straggler here. There are only five records of its being killed in the state. Two were taken on Big Lake in Pottawattamie County, September 26, 1895, according to DuMont in *Revised List of Birds in Iowa*; a male was collected in Polk County, December 27, 1932, by James R. Harlan; and there is a

record that William G. Savage of Hillsboro killed three with one shot in Van Buren County. A juvenile male was shot by Cleo Johnson of Des Moines on Beaver Creek, near Des Moines, November 5, 1957. Another juvenile male, taken by Jack Musgrove at Big Creek Lake in Polk County on October 31, 1976, is now a specimen in the collection of the State Historical Museum.

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81-mB

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30 November

Dear Tom,

A typical little time in the field fall for me. I haven't heard of much other activity from others around here either. I will get after Steve to get his act together and get his observations in the mail too.

A friend in Des Moines who is a decoy carver told me he had seen several Harlequin Ducks in the collection at the Iowa Historical Society Museum. I asked him to check for any from Iowa and he called back last week to say that the 1976 bird was there. I had looked for it several years ago but apparently it was out on loan to some painter but has now been returned. I will try to get down there sometime soon and get a photo of it.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim".