

Harlequin Duck

5 Nov 1957

Beaver Creek near Des Moines, Polk Co., IA

Cleo Johnson

Brown 1977, Musgrove and Musgrove 1977

Record Number: 81-MA

Classification: NA

REFERENCES

Brown 1971

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

Des Moines Register, ca 5 Nov 1957 [not reviewed]

VOTE (1981): 2-I, 4-IV, 1-V

I, If we can find it, otherwise II.

IV, Could be III if there is a good description in the

Tribune.

I, if any photos or specimen exists. III otherwise.

IV, need description.

IV, No details, or indication that Musgrove saw the specimen.

Brown 1971  
p 402

Harlequin Duck Histrionicus histrionicus (Linnaeus)

Accidental

Musgrove and Musgrove (1943) reported "Only 3 records of it having been killed within our state." A more recent record was on 5 November, 1957 when one was shot on Beaver Creek near Des Moines and described in the Des Moines Tribune at the time. ] 7

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: 1¼ 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. ] 7 3 6 4 8