

King Eider

8 Nov 1970

Lake Odesa, Louisa Co., IA

Steven Slack

UI #33585, P-0051; Newlon and Kent 1981, IBL 61:84

Record Number: 89-AM
Classification: A-S

SPECIMEN

University of Iowa #33585

PHOTOGRAPH

T. H. Kent, P-0051 (IBL 51:127)

REFERENCES

Newlon, M. C., and T. H. Kent. 1981. Fifth record of King Eider in Iowa. IBL 51:126-129.

Photograph: IBL 51:127 (P-0051)

Records Committee: IBL 61:84

VOTE: 5 A-S, 1 A-P

A-S. Bill structure appears definite for King, not Common Eider.

A-S. No problems.

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Fifth Record of the King Eider for Iowa — A previously-undescribed specimen of the King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) exists in the collection of the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History and was recently examined by the authors. The specimen (SUI no. 33585), a female or immature, was collected on 8 November 1970, by Mr. Steven Slack, at Lake Odesa, Louisa Co., Iowa, and was brought by him to the museum for identification. It represents the fourth specimen and fifth record of this species for the state. The previous records are:

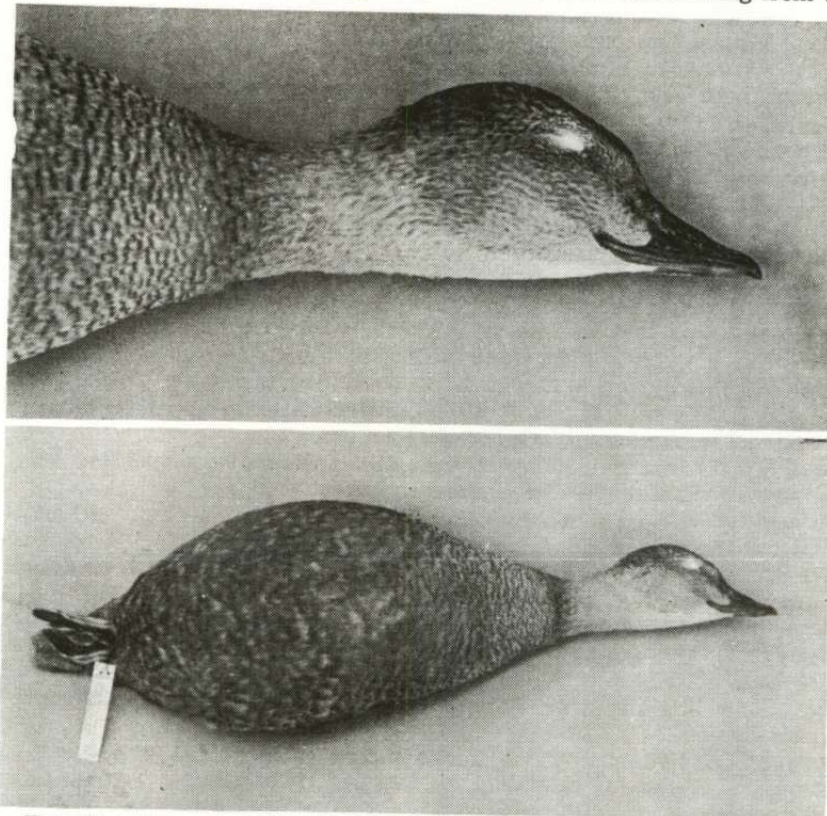
1. An immature male shot on the Mississippi River at Keokuk, 10 November 1894 (Praeger, 1895), specimen no. 25003 in the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. (There are several later references to this record that differ either as to place or date: Anderson (1907); Praeger (1925); Bent (1925). These are presumably erroneous.)

2. Another immature male, shot on 18 November 1950 on the Mississippi River opposite New Boston, Illinois (Morrissey, 1951). The specimen is in the Putnam Museum, Davenport.

3. A sight record from Bellevue, Jackson Co., Iowa, on 20 December 1964 (IBL 35:24, 1965). (Brown (1971) and Musgrove (1977), apparently in error, list this record for 1954.)

4. An immature shot on Inham Lake near Wallingford, Emmet Co., Iowa, on 8 November 1971 (Petersen, 1972).

In the north-central United States the King Eider is a fairly frequent vagrant. There are about thirty records for the states of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan (Musgrove, 1977; Brown, 1971; DuMont, 1933; Bohlen, et al., 1979; Green and Janssen, 1975; Petersen and Fawks, 1977; *American Birds* 1973-1980). The records extend from October to March, with a single May record from northern Minnesota, but more than two-thirds of the records are from November and December. Most are from the Great Lakes, the major rivers, or other large bodies of water. The majority of the birds are immatures. There are no records of this species from Missouri, Oklahoma, or South Dakota, and only a single record from Kansas (Easterla and Anderson, 1967; Whitney et al., 1978; Johnston, 1965, Sutton, 1967), suggesting that these birds are arriving from the



Female or immature King Eider. University of Iowa specimen No. 33585. Photo by T. H. Kent.

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Newlon, M. C., and T. H. Kent. 1981. Fifth record of King Eider in Iowa. *Iowa Bird Life* 51:126-129. (continued)

north and continuing on eastward rather than southward.

The source of the King Eiders seen in the north-central states is not certainly known. King Eiders breed on tundra from the northwest coastal plain of Alaska to the southwest shore of Hudson Bay, throughout the Canadian arctic archipelago, and on the eastern and western coasts of Greenland (Palmer, 1976; Bellrose, 1976). Adults and juveniles differ in their migration timetables: adults migrate in late summer to traditional moulting grounds and move to their wintering areas only in late fall; juveniles do not undergo a moult migration but migrate directly to the wintering areas. Both adults and juveniles apparently linger in the arctic until forced to move south by the freezing of the sea. Birds from the western arctic migrate along the coast and winter off Alaska and the Aleutian islands; birds from the eastern arctic migrate, mostly over water, to western Greenland and then south to the coasts of Canada and the extreme northeastern United States. Neither migration route seems likely to produce vagrancy to the north-central United States. Palmer (1976) speculates that small numbers of birds, lingering late in open leads in the ice, may be forced by the onset of winter to migrate directly south instead of taking the traditional coastal routes. Since juveniles tend to remain further north than adults in the fall, this would explain their more frequent occurrence as vagrants.

We thank Dr. George Schrimper, Curator of the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, for access to the specimen.

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