

Harlequin Duck

CA 1896

Hillsboro, Van Buren Co., IA

W. G. Savage

Anderson 1907

Record Number: 81-LX

Classification: NA

REFERENCE

Anderson 1907

DuMont 1933

Musgrove and Musgrove 1977

VOTE (1981): 2-III, I-IV, 3-V, 1-VI

III, no details of plumage.

V, No details -- apparently depends on hunter's word. No indication that Savage actually saw the birds.

Anderson, 1907
p 178

49. (155). *Histrionicus histrionicus* (Linn.). Harlequin Duck.

The Harlequin Duck is another northern species which occasionally straggles into the Mississippi Valley in winter or during the migrations. It has been taken in winter in Wisconsin and Illinois and as far south as St. Louis, Mo. "Two definite records for Nebraska, I. S. Trostler recording the taking of two specimens on the Missouri River at Omaha, Sept. 16, 1893, and of another at Florence Lake, near Omaha, Sept. 19, 1895" (Rev. Bds. Neb., 29.)

County records: Pottawattamie—"Two Harlequin Ducks were brought to me for identification. They were killed at Big Lake, Pottawattamie county, Sept. 26, 1895" (Trostler). Sioux—"saw a part of a skin—head, skin of one side, and wing—shot at Hawarden in 1886." (Berry). Van Buren—"about eleven years ago a hunter shot three at one shot. This is the only time I ever knew of them being in our locality—Hillsboro" (W. G. Savage).

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DuMont 1933
p 41

Histrionicus histrionicus pacificus Brooks. Western Harlequin Duck

Accidental. Anderson (1907) included this species as a straggler, and listed two definite records for Nebraska by I. S. Trostler who took two specimens on the Missouri River at Omaha, September 16, 1893, and another at Florence Lake, near Omaha, September 19, 1895. These county records were given by Anderson as follows: "Pottawattamie—"Two Harlequin Ducks were brought to me for identification. They were killed at Big Lake, Pottawattamie County, Sept. 26, 1895" (Trostler). . . . Van Buren—"About eleven years ago a hunter shot three at one shot. This is the only time I ever knew of them being in our locality—Hillsboro" (W. G. Savage)." A male Western Harlequin Duck in breeding plumage was shot on the Des Moines River in Polk County, by James R. Harlan, December 27, 1932. The specimen is in the State Historical Museum, Des Moines.

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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: 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.

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