

Female Hooded Merganser seen by Kay Niyo, Kevin and Rosanne Healy, and Anna Gardner.

Description: Small merganser with thin bill. Upper mandible dark, lower mandible yellow. Overall brown with small white patch on side (white wing secondaries). Brown appearing above water line when swimming. White belly visible when she rose up out of water and flapped wings while preening. Crest brownish rust extended back and raised up and down as she preened in water.

Sounds: None

Time and Conditions of observation: 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., Jan. 1, 1999. Overcast, light snow flurries, 10 degrees F., wind 10-15 mph. Seen with Leica 10 x 42 binoculars, Kowa and Swarovski spotting scopes with zoom to 60. Bird was about 125-150 ft. from viewers. Viewed 20 minutes at 9:30 a.m. and 10 minutes at 1:30 p.m.

Behavior and habitat: Bird was seen in Des Moines River just below Fraser Dam. It was bathing and preening vigorously, turning all directions, raising and lowering crest repeatedly, and raising up and flapping wings. It was above the water most of the 30 minutes observed. It dove several times. While tipping head to preen, lower yellow mandible was frequently visible in spotting scopes. Observed twice for a total of about 30 minutes.

Similar Species: Similar species could be Common Merganser, but the bird seen was much smaller with no white breast. Also, Bufflehead would have white on the breast and sides and white behind the eye and no crest. Redbreasted Merganser would be much larger than the bird seen and would have an orange bill and some white on breast.