

Discuss

Species: Harlequin Duck

(Vernacular Name)

Histrionicus histrionicus

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): 24 October 1976Time Bird Seen: 5:30 PM to 5:45 PMLocality: Barr Lake State ParkNearest Town: BrightonCounty: Adams

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Tom Shane

5957 So. Gallup, #112, Littleton, Colo. 80120

798-6385

Optical Equipment: 7X50 binoculars; 15-60X B&L Zoom telescope

If photographed, type of equipment used:

Light Conditions: sun shining on bird at first, but later sun went downDistance from bird (how measured): minimum estimated distance-250 ft.Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Female or immature

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

The bird was first observed swimming in a lagoon at the northwest corner of Barr Lake; when the flock of ducks it was in (about 500 birds-Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal and American Wigeon) flew farther out onto the lake, the Harlequin went with them. Because the sun had gone down at this point, the bird could not be relocated due to the poor lighting. The bird was never seen to come out of the water onto the shore; nor did it ever dive.

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern. Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

A small duck, appearing several inches shorter than a Gadwall in direct comparison. A fairly compact duck, with a small, rounded head, moderately long neck, a fairly long tail which it generally cocked in a manner identical to a Ruddy Duck. Bill distinctly quite small and short (seemed too small for the bird, probably about the smallest bill I have ever seen on a duck in comparison to the head) and black in color. Body uniform dark blackish-brown (including wings-no white patches seen on wings when the bird was in flight). A strongly defined, bright white spot on auricular patch behind eye, a large whitish spot in front of and below the eye, indistinctly connected across the lores with a whitish, fuzzily-defined spot in front of and above the eye. This pattern is a slight variation from that shown in the field guides of three, distinct and unconnected spots, but Van Remsen (who has had considerable field experience with this species on the California coast) assures me that this is often the case. This is the only aspect in which this bird varied in the slightest from any illustration I could find of this species. The face pattern is illustrated below.



Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

None.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Fairly large, shallow, plains irrigation reservoir.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

Bufflehead(the most similar species)female: Even we first saw the bird, we were both convinced the bird was not a Bufflehead female. That bird has only a single white spot on the face, unlike the bird I saw. In addition, it has a distinct white patch on the wings, the bird I saw very clearly had solid wings with no patches whatsoever. Ruddy Duck-The only reason the Ruddy Duck could be confused was the manner in which this bird held its tail(the field guides mention that the Harlequin often does that). Otherwise, the smaller bill and completely different pace pattern easily eliminates the Ruddy.

Scoters*All are much larger, with heavier bills. Black has a very different face pattern, White-winged a white wing patch, the Surf is substantially larger with a rather massive bill.

Oldsquaw-Normally, the Oldsquaw could not possibly be confused with a Harlequin. However, I have seen one unusually dark Oldsquaw which could conceivably be confused with this bird, but the Oldsquaw has a stubbier, thicker bill and a different pattern and position of white on the face. But even the dark Oldsquaw I saw was lighter than the Harlequin, with a lighter face and throat and a different face pattern(the light areas being around the eye and above and behind it, rather than in front of and below it).

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I have seen Buffleheads and Ruddy Duck in numerous occasions, including many females and(in the case of the Ruddy)winter males. I have seen all three scoters on a number of occasions, including a number of observations of females and immatures in Colorado. I have seen the Oldsquaw twice in Colorado(one a typical female, one a somewhat dark female). I have never seen a Harlequin Duck(before).

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

Standard field guides consulted, supported the identification. Van Remsen, in a personal conversation, also supported the identification, especially with regard to the only reservation I initially had(see above).

This report was written from notes made during X after X observation; from memory

PRINT NAME: Robert Andrews SIGNATURE: Robert Andrews DATE: 27 Oct 1976
Street Address: 1390 So Ivy Way Town and State: Denver, Colo 80224 ZIP:

Return to: JACK REDDALL - 1450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80110

Species: *Histrionicus histrionicus*
(Vernacular Name)*Harlequin Duck* *discuss*
(Scientific Name-use binomial)Date(s): Oct. 24, 1976 Time Bird Seen: 5 to 5:30 est.
Locality: North corner of Bear Lake
Nearest Town: Bear Lake County: Adams Co

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME ADDRESS TELEPHONE

Bob Andrews 1390 S. Tug Way Denver, Colo.Optical Equipment: 30X B&L ScopeIf photographed, type of equipment used: —Light Conditions: SunDistance from bird (how measured): Fst 100-150 ydsNumber of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: Ad ♀ Plumage: —

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

*Swam among other ducks but not with them.
Never did feed, not aggressive.*

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern. Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

1. Duck smaller than Gadwall
2. Neck, Back, Sides uniform dark gray
3. Faint white patch in front of eye
a brighter white spot below and behind eye
4. Bill small and thin similar to Ruddy Duck
5. Wing apparently all dark gray no white showing
6. Tail up, not as high as Ruddy Duck usually
curves tail

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

X

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Linnic

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

1. First impression; a duck I had never observed
2. First comparison; Ruddy Duck with tail up but cheek patch was wrong and bill was thinner
3. Second comparison; Check-spots more similar to a Scoter but the bill was much smaller and the bird was smaller than the nearby Andwalls and Pintails
4. Third comparison; Bufflehead, cheek patch was wrong, head shape was wrong, and body was uniform dark gray, bill was close in size and shape, body size was close
5. I returned to my truck for a field guide, when I returned the bird had flown, Bob Andrews saw no white on wings. He then came up with the idea of Harlequin Duck. Checking the field guide I was convinced except for the two white patches in front of eye being blended together

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

Harlequin Duck — none

Ruddy Duck — numerous observations — winter & summer 1970 & 71

Surf Scoter — one observation ♀

Bufflehead — numerous observations winter 1970 & 71

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

Birds of North America, Robbins et al. — A Field Guide to Western Birds, Peterson

The Ducks, Geese & Swans of N.A., Kontrig, — Birds of America, Pearson

Plate 19 in Birds of America was the picture resembling the bird observed the closest.

The mount at the Denver Mus. Nat Hist is almost the same plumage as the bird observed

This report was written from notes made during after X observation; from memory X

PRINT NAME: Thomas G. Shane SIGNATURE: Thomas G. Shane DATE: 11-12-76

Street Address: 5957 S. Calleup #112 Town and State: Littleton, Col. ZIP: 80120

Return to: JACK REDDALL - 4450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80110