

rec'd 1/12/01

CFO-RC FILE #: 2001-1  
RESULTS: \_\_\_\_\_

**COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM.**

(Please print or type. Attach photographs, drawings, and additional pages if necessary).

Species: Harlequin Duck  
(Common Name) *Histrionicus histrionicus*  
(Scientific Name)

Date(s) of observation: 14 January 2001.

Number of birds seen: one.

Sex: female.

Plumage: adult.

Exact location: Animas River in Durango.

County: La Plata.

Nearest town: Durango.

Length of Observation: 20 minutes total.

Time(s) of Observation: off and on from 8:15 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Mark Janos, Mona & Dean Hill, Tony Leukering, Joey Kellner, Dick Schottler, Norm Erthal, Joe Roller, Doug Faulkner, Andrew Spencer.

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): First found on 12 January 2001 by Mona & Dean Hill.

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) position): Sunny and cold. The bird was west of observer and sun was behind observer.

Optical equipment used: 10 x 40 Bausch & Lomb binoculars and Andrew Spencer's Swarovski spotting scope.

Distance from bird (s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): The bird was about 30 to 60 feet away in the middle of the river.

Was the bird photographed: yes.

If so, have you submitted photos? no.

Who took the photographs? Joey Kellner took photos and Norm Erthal took video of the bird.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: The habitat was perfect. The bird was swimming and diving through the rocks, cascades, and rapids on the Animas River in Durango, Colorado.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying; feeding; habits; behaviors used in identifying the species or in supporting the identification): The birds behavior was typical of the species. The bird was swimming and diving through the rocks, cascades, and rapids along on the Animas River in Durango. The bird was once seen sitting and standing on a rock in the river. The bird was once seen flying up the river. The bird was mostly by itself, though sometimes got near other ducks like Buffleheads and Mallards. Once two Pied-billed Grebe swam near it.

Describe the bird in detail: This is the most important part of this report. Include overall size and shape, and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings, and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the (bird(s)).

Describe other details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, etc. That were important in making the

identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted: you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches, or copy of field notes): The overall shape was of a small duck. Round head, small bill, and small body. The size was smaller than Mallards and bigger than the Pied-billed Grebes. The bird was a duck because of behavior of swimming in the river, and by shape and size. The head was brown colored and round shaped. The face was brown which had a small round white dot behind each eye. It also had a bigger white patch below each eye. It also had another small white patch above the bigger white patch on each side of the face. The throat color was brown. The breast color was brown, though looked lighter than the head and back color. The belly color seemed lighter than the rest of the bird. The sides of the bird were brown. The color of the area under the tail was dark brown. The nape color was brown. The back color was brown. The color of both wings were brown. The tail color was brown. The bill was small and gray. The legs were gray, which I noticed when the bird was standing on the rock. Eye color was dark. In flight, it looked like a small dark duck that flew scoter like (very fast and low over the water). I identified the bird as a female Harlequin Duck by its dark brown color overall, three white areas on the face small gray bill, by its small duck shape and size, and by its round head.

Describe the bird's song and calls if heard: I did hear it make some sort of soft quacking noise once, that I am not able to describe, as I didn't hear it again.

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:

Surf Scoter: Much larger with bigger bill and more blocky head (not round). White patches on face are different.

Long-tailed Duck: About the same size bird, though always has white under tail coverts and has light sides usually. Face pattern is different.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

Harlequin Duck: I have seen a male and female in June of 1985 in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, along rapids along the river. The habitat was exactly the same as this Durango bird.

Surf Scoter: I have seen hundreds in California in winter and a few almost annually in Colorado since 1988..

Long-tailed Duck: I have seen a few almost annually in Colorado since 1988.

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how this influenced you identification (during and after observation): I looked at the new Sibley Guide to Birds after the sighting.

This report was made from notes taken

during \_\_\_\_\_,

or after X observation,

or later from memory\_\_\_\_\_.

Reporting observer: Brandon K. Percival

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 835 Harmony Drive, Pueblo West, CO, 81007-2632, 719-547-3722, flammowl@juno.com

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

recd 1/29/02

NEW STATE RECORD  UNUSUAL RECORD **Species:** Harlequin Duck (*Melanitta nigra*)**Date:** 14 January 2001    **Number seen:** one**Sex:** female**Plumage:** ?**Locality:** Animas River, Durango**Elevation:** about 6500'**Nearest town:** Durango**County:** La Plata**Time observed:** ~0900-1000 MST**Duration of observation:** off and on for about 15 minutes during that time

**Description:** Mona & Dean Hill had found a female Harlequin Duck on the Animas River in Durango on 12 January and I was among a contingent of Denver-area birders that chased after it on the 14<sup>th</sup>. We got to the site and after a brief bout of searching, found the bird on a rock in the river. We watched it perching, swimming, diving, and flying, all at reasonably close range.

The bird was a smallish diving duck (much smaller than the nearby Mallards; perhaps 2/3 to 3/4 the length of the Mallards) that was medium brown over most of its body, though with the underparts slightly paler than the upperparts; the head was the darkest part of the bird's plumage (except for the blackish tail). On the head were two to three white patches, with some question as to whether the white in front of the eye was split into two patches or was just one big, amorphous, ill-defined patch. This patch extended from below the posterior edge of the eye down to the gape, up along the base of the bill and onto the forehead in front of and above the eye. There was a dark loral spot immediately in front of the eye that almost split the forward white patch. The rear white patch was sharply defined and nearly circular and situated on the rear of the auriculars. The darkest part of the head was situated between the two white patches. Other than pale-tipped greater coverts, there was no other pattern to the bird. The bill was dark gray and fairly small, much smaller than would the bill of any scoter be. What I could see of the legs were a dull, yellowy-gray, though the impression of the leg color changed with different light angles.

**Similar species eliminated:** The only similar species are the two spot-faced species of scoter, Surf and White-winged. The latter is readily eliminated, as the secondaries were entirely dark brown, which we saw while the bird was in flight at least twice. Additionally, that species is at least the length and bulk of a Mallard. Surf Scoter is just a bit harder to rule out, but not at all difficult. That species has a substantial bill that would possibly have been as long as this bird's head was deep (from bill tip to nape). Additionally, similarly plumaged Surf Scoters have an obvious black crown contrasting with a brown face and the white spots do not extend above the level of the eyes. That species is also nearly the size of a Mallard.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** No vocalizations heard.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen 10s of 1000s each of the confusion scoter species and >100 Harlequin Ducks.

**Light conditions:** sun behind me

**Optical equipment used:** Leica 32x and Swarovski 8.5x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest approach of about 15 meters as it flew by me upstream

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Mark Janos, Brandon Percival, Dick Schottler, Joey Kellner, Norm Erthal, Joe Roller, Dean & Mona Hill, Doug Faulkner, and Andrew Spencer

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** numerous, including Susan Allerton, Chris Schultz, Jim Beatty, Larry Semo, Jo Stewart, Rachel Hopper, John Vanderpoel, and Peter Gent

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** I did not photograph, but many others did

**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none **b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**



**Address:** Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 15 January 2001 and 29 January 2002 from notes written on the evening of the sighting (yup, I finally dredged this thing up and finished it), with reference to pictures of the bird taken by Joey Kellner

rec'd 2/2  
ppb. - yes

## Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form (This is a two-page report. Please print or type. Attach

photographs and additional pages if necessary.) Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

Species:(Common Name) Harlequin Duck (Scientific Name) *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Date(s) of occurrence: Jan 20, 2001

Number of birds seen: one Sex: female Plumage: basic

Exact location: On the Animas river in Durango, Co at approx. 15th and Hwy 550.

County: Nearest town: Durango, Co Elevation:

Length of observation: 30 minutes Time(s) of observation: 10:45 to 11:15 am

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Vic Zerbe, Mike Janssen and Mark ?

Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s):

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: Clear, temps around 25 to 30 degrees, light variable winds. sun at the observers back or off left shoulder.

Optical equipment used: Ziess 10X40, Vic's scope ( Lieca I believe)

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): 100 feet

Was bird(s) photographed? video If so, have you submitted photos? yes

Who took the photographs? Ric Olson

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: River with current ,light to moderate rapids.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): The bird was observed first preening on a rock in the river, then swimming and diving in the rapids.

Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes): This duck was noticeable smaller than the many mallards, similar in size to the occasional Ring-neck Duck and bigger than the more numerous Buffleheads. The bird was a warm brown overall with back and wings darker than the underparts. The head was round, with a bright white , round post-ocular or aricular spot. The eye was dark, the forehead had a steep slope to the grayish bill, which was about one half the length of the head. A second white spot on the head was located in the lores region but was not as white or demarcated as the aricular spot. The throat, breast, flanks, vent, upper and lower tail coverts were a lighter brown tha the head, nape, back and wings. The belly was an off white color. the legs were not seen well but were dark. What was interesting was that the tail was held on the surface of the water when swimming, not above like most ducks.

Describe bird's call or song: none heard

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:Similar species include mainly the Surf Scoter, but also the *Aythya* type ducks, Long-tailed Duck and the Eiders. The facial pattern and bill shape eliminates the Eiders and the *Aythya* type ducks. Long-tailed Duck is eliminated because of the brown under tail coverts. The Surf Scoter ( as well as the other scoters) was eliminated by bill shape and length, the over all size. The facial pattern, although similar in some Surf Scoters, is not as well demarated as in the Harlequin Duck.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? none

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): Sibley 2000, for latin names and similar species.

This report is from notes made during video or after observation or later from memory

Date of written report: Jan 26, 2001

Reporting observer: Ric Olson Signature: ROL

Reporting Observer's Address: 9450 N. Heather Dr., Castle Rock, Co 80104, 303-790-7753

City: State: Zip:

**Send report to: Colorado Birds Record Committee c/o Bill Lisowsky 2919 Silverplume Dr. Ft. Collins, Co. 80526**

JAN 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001



Tony,  
These ARE A few stills from A 10 minute  
VIDEO. I would be happy to send you A copy of the VIDEO  
if you would like one. Ric