

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: *Harlequin Duck*

Scientific Name: *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Date: Dec. 21, 1985 Time: 4:35 P.M.

Length of time observed: 15 to 20 min on Dec 21

at 12-30 & 1-6, 8, 9, 11

15 to 10 minutes on the other days

Number: 1 <sup>12, 13 & 14 & 23</sup> Age:

Sex: Female

Location: Logan River, About 1500-1600 E  
on Canyon Rd. Logan, Ut.

Lat/long:

Elevation (if known):

Distance to bird: 30 to 40 ft.

Light conditions: Day light

Optical equipment: Nikon 7x20 binoculars

Weather: fair-clear

Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

All of a sudden, the little dark duck came out from under some low hanging, snow covered branches along Logan River. She was swimming and diving here and there - all very quickly. She circled a few times, and went back and forth, but continued to fish, swimming downstream, and going with the current. I followed her for about a block, watching through my binoculars. I particularly noted the dark eye with white patches above and below and the more distinct white dot further back on her head. She looked dark gray except for the white patches. I could not see the belly and saw no white or other color on her wings.

When I returned home, I checked out my field guides for bird identification and phoned ornithologist, Dr. Keith Dixon. I suggested Harlequin, but he thought more likely White-winged Scoter.

After several more sightings, I was pretty sure it was the Harlequin because of the small size (13 to 14" I would estimate) rounded head, small bill and no white on the wings.

On Jan. 9, my 5th sighting of her, she got on top of a rock in the river, flopped her wings and flew a little. Now I was positive the wings had no white, and I could see her gray feet and legs and her pale belly.

On Jan. 10 I phoned Terry Barnes, an officer in the Bridgerland Audubon, and person who checks out reports of unusual birds. She and her husband, John, verified that it was a Harlequin on Jan. 11 and put the information on the hot line. Pictures were taken and the duck was seen by many.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery: none heard

Behavior: Diving, fishing, moving quickly downstream the first time I saw her. Seemed to ignore me - but stayed on far side of river. On Jan. 9, she got out of the water and stood on a rock, preened herself and flapped her wings and flew a short distance.

Habitat: She swims up and down Logan river - up (or east) as far as just below the first dam.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated: Since I got a very good look at her face the first time and saw the dark eye with white above and below it and the other white spot, the only other duck considered was the white-winged Scoter. However, the spots were not like the Scoter. And she didn't have any white on her wings - which I kept looking for. Her wings were very visible when she got out of the water on Jan. 9 and flapped them, and that day her gray legs + feet were visible. And - her small size + smaller bill were apparent.

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

I had never seen a Harlequin duck before. The most similar species I am familiar with would be Goldeneyes and Buffleheads.

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
Bird guides consulted: National Geographic Field Guide, - also Petersons and the Golden Guide to Field Identification. Also consulted ornithologist, Dr. Keith Dixon who informed me it was most likely the white winged Scoter, as they had

Significance of record in this area or the state: first record (I've seen here before) of a Harlequin Duck sighted in Utah

Additional material: (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available)

Description from notes taken at time of sighting \_\_\_\_\_ notes made later  from memory \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: Pat Bahler

Signature: Pat Bahler

Address: 1246 Island Dr. Logan, Ut. 84321

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Terry + John Barnes - after I called them.

Date prepared: Jan. 17, 1986

Return this form to: Ella Sorensen  
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