

Common Eider
27 Jan 1995
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA
*S. Dinsmore, *****
IBL 65:47, 66:96

Record Number: 95-01
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore (27 Jan), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014
Jim Dinsmore (27 Jan, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014
Thomas H. Kent (27 Jan), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246
Jim Fuller (27 Jan), 6 Longview Knoll, Iowa City 52240
Reid Allen (27 Jan), 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines 50265
Ann Johnson (28 Jan), 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211
Mark Proescholdt (28 Jan), Box 65, Liscomb 50148
Chris Edwards (29 Jan), 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317
Peter C. Petersen (30 Jan), 235 McClellan, Davenport 52803
Ray Cummins (3 Feb), 609 S. Main, Centerville 53544
Robert Cecil (1 Feb), 1315 41st St., Des Moines 50311
Diane Porter (18 Feb), 908 East Briggs, Fairfield 52556

PHOTOGRAPHS

Reid Allen, 29 Jan and 29 Feb, P-0442

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:47
Records Committee: IBL 66:96
Dinsmore, S. J. 1998. Common Eider in Marion County. IBL
68:105.

Field Notes 49:257, 1995, P-0442

VOTE: 4 A-P, 3 A-O

A-O, I was prepared to unequivocally accept as A-P until reading Hoogerheide's statement. Has anyone talked to this waterfowl collector recently? I am fairly confident that this same bird was at Jester Park on 26 March which would put it a short distance from the collector. Then again, maybe it was moving toward the arctic! Behavior below Red Rock; i.e., foraging with Mallards also raise doubts on origin.

A-P, One of the photos (side view with wings raised) shows the very thin extension of the proximal upper mandible along the culmen to a point halfway between the nostril and the eye. This thin bill process along with the rounded feather extension toward the mandible make this bird to be of the Pacific race, *Somateria mollissemata v-nigra*. The best description of subspecies that I found was in Kortright (Kortright, F. H. 1942. The Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America. Stackpole Co., Harrisburg, PA). The key bill and facial feathering features are undescribed or incorrectly described in the documentations but can be seen in some of the photos. Two documentations with drawings show bill features of the eastern race, *S. m. dresseri*, but the photos show otherwise, illustrating the influence of books on what observers perceive. We need to determine whether *S. m. v-nigra* has been captivated in recent years. Delacour (Delacour, J. 1959. The Waterfowl of the World Vol. 3. Country Life Lmted, London) indicates that there are no records of Pacific (*S. m. v-nigra*) or Northern (*S. m. borealis*) eiders in captivity, but American (*S.*

m. dresseri) and European (S. m. m.) are fairly common in captivity and bred.

A-O, There is no doubt from the documentation descriptions and from the photos that this is an adult female S. m. nigra. This bird evidently had little fear of the many observers (sometimes in large and somewhat noisy groups). I spoke with a waterfowl breeder who said that he knew of several breeders in Iowa who were successfully raising Common Eiders in captivity, one being close to where this bird was seen (mentioned in documentation by Cecil). The origin of this bird is uncertain and needs to be investigated more thoroughly.

A-O, Origin questionable, but I can be swayed by logic. Did this bird leave with other diving ducks? Were there other Common Eiders seen away from their usual range this winter? The paleness of the bird may have been an artifact of captivity.

RE-VOTE (by mail): 4 A-P, 2 A-E [= A-O], 2 no vote

A-P, Unless the subcommittee turns up evidence of this subspecies at game farms in Iowa or nearby, I will stay with my original vote.

A-E, The bird's length of stay, relationship with Mallards, and tameness suggest an escaped bird. If the committee finds no S. m. v-nigra in captivity then I would like to change this vote to A-P.

no vote, I am leaning toward changing my vote to acceptance but would prefer to wait until the subcommittee's research is finished. Would also like to see the photos again.

A-P, The bill features strongly suggest S. m. v-nigra, which is not kept in captivity.

A-P, I will vote A-P for now for S. m. v-nigra, although more investigation as to the status of this subspecies needs to be done. I am contacting several waterfowl breeders in and close to Iowa and will report on my findings.

no vote, I would like to hold my vote until the captive game committee findings are complete. (Having spent a lot of time with this bird, I feel obligated to point out that tameness should not be considered an indicator of captivity. Many tundra species are approachable, i.e., L. T. Jaeger. I found this bird to be rather wary of humans unless they were on the bridge above the bird. Many species will come quite close; the iron bridge is just a good viewing spot. This bird often associated with Mallards when about 95% of the waterfowl population below the dam was Mallards. Later in the winter it was more often found with Scaup.)

A-E, Pending findings of Captive Game Subcommittee (Does this name not presuppose a finding?).

RE-VOTE (by mail): 6 A-P, 1 A-O

A-P, 400 Game Farms in Iowa alone, Wow! This certainly casts suspicion on not only this record, but odd or unexpected waterfowl in Iowa. I am very tempted to change my vote to A-O which may be the most appropriate vote. However, due to the rarity of this species/subspecies in captivity, I will vote A-P.

A-P, The rarity of Common Eider in captivity convinces me that the Red Rock bird is not an escaped bird.

A-P, While there is not absolute guarantee that this was a

wild bird, the odds of it being an escapee seem almost infinitesimally small. I am ready to change my vote.

A-P, I am convinced that this bird was *S. m. v-nigra* and that this subspecies is not kept in captivity.

A-P, With (so far) non existence of this subspecies of Common Eider in captivity the only conclusion that can be reached on this record is that this is a wild bird. Unless other evidence of this species being in captivity and a likelihood of its being an escape is brought forward then I will vote this record as A-P.

A-P, Seems as if Common Eiders are rare in captivity. The pacific rare "*nigra*" may not be.

A-O, It would be of interest to ascertain information on subspecies held e.g. Polk Co. breeder (he was said to be knowledgeable on this point). I am leaning towards A-P vote based on general scarcity of *v-nigra* in captivity, but I do not believe we yet have enough information for a conclusion.

8 (ST, CM). The only Tricolored Heron appeared at Medusa Marsh, OH May 8 (LRO). The only sizable Cattle Egret counts consisted of 150 in *St. Clair*, IL Apr. 22 (KMc, DK) and 40 in *Fremont*, IA May 27 (TK). An early May survey at Ottawa N.W.R., OH yielded only two Green Herons, raising concern about this species (*vide* LRO). An Apr. 29 census of the L.Cal. Black-crowned Night-Heron rookery yielded 1066 birds (WM), suggesting that the colony remains sound. An erythristic Black-crowned, with bright rufous-orange replacing normally white areas of the face and underparts, was also seen at L.Cal., May 7 (WM). Iowa's 2nd Glossy Ibis record was logged May 18 when two were discovered at Riverton (†TK, †JF, †B&LP, ph.); one was still present May 22 (†RSi). This species also appeared at 2 Ohio locations, where singletons were reported at Pickerel Creek W.M.A., May 6 & 11 (†RH, KMe, m.ob.) and Magee Marsh May 9 (VF). The only extralimital White-faced Ibis was at Goose Lake Prairie S.P., IL May 15 (†CA, JM, m.ob.).

Waterfowl

Noteworthy aspects of an otherwise typical Greater White-fronted Goose migration included a very late bird in Jax.P., May 14–15 (†PC, TJ, ph.) and one at H.B.S.P., Apr. 1 (RHn), where this species is rare. An increasing Ross' Goose population, plus more careful scrutiny of Snow Geese flocks, has produced a significant increase in reports of this diminutive species. In addition to this spring's peak count of 65 Ross's Geese at Willow Slough, IA Mar. 18 (SD), 13 were

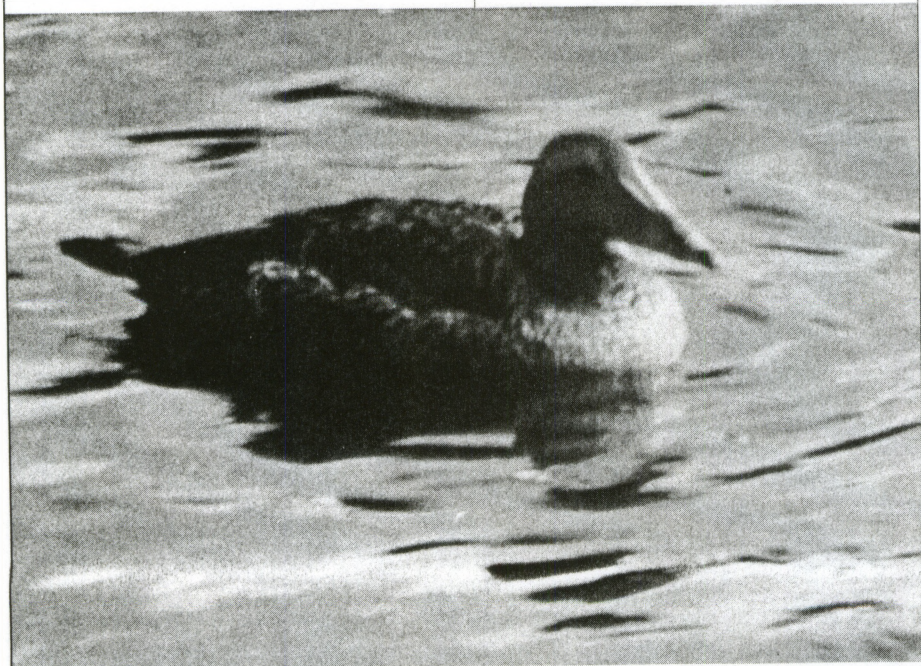
seen in *Winnebago*, IL Mar. 8–16 (†BG, m.ob.), two adults were in Glencoe, IL Mar. 19 (†LB), and a singleton wandered e. to *Pike*, OH Mar. 4 (†DO). The Region's only Brant was at Sheldon's Marsh, OH, where it was seen Mar. 19 & 21 (FD, JDu, ST).

Noteworthy maximum puddle duck counts included 3000 Green-winged Teal at Riverton, IA Mar. 19 (TK), 1709 N. Pintail at Saylorville Res., IA Mar. 11 (BE), >1000 Blue-winged Teal at Clinton L., IL Apr. 12 (RCh), and 560 Am. Wigeon at Little Portage, OH Apr. 1 (VF). Rare dabblers included seven ♂ Cinnamon Teal in Iowa, plus two in Illinois and a winter Eur. Wigeon at Castalia, OH that lingered through Mar. 5 (TL). The bay duck passage was average, with peak counts of 3000 Redheads at Sandusky Bay, OH Mar. 20 (VF) and 8000 Lesser Scaup at Magee Marsh, OH Mar. 25 (RH). Hands down winner of "best duck of the season award" was a ♀ **Common Eider** that appeared below Red Rock Dam, IA Jan. 27 and was seen sporadically through Apr. 7 (TS, †m.ob., ph.), providing Iowa's 2nd record. Interestingly, some observers believed this bird showed characters of the w. race *v-nigra*. Following the typical spring pattern, small numbers of scoters appeared at many inland sites, especially e. of the Mississippi River. Noteworthy among these was a Surf and four White-winged Scoters at Kentucky's Falls of the Ohio, Mar. 13 (A&TR). The largest Ruddy Duck concentrations consisted of 831 at L. Manawa, IA Mar. 31 (SD) and 600 at both Sandusky Bay, OH Apr. 8 (JP) and LaDue Res., OH Apr. 16 (CH).

Hawks to Cranes

The spring flight did not produce good numbers of migrating hawks. For the 3rd consecutive year, hawk numbers at the Indiana Dunes decreased and daily maximum counts across the Region were low for most species. For example, the Region's highest Broad-winged Hawk tally consisted of only 80 birds in *Tuscarawas*, OH Apr. 18 (ES); this suggests that meteorological steering currents deflected migrating raptors around the Midwest. The good news involved the appearance of Illinois's 2nd **White-tailed Kite**, an adult seen over Washington Park, *Sangamon*, Apr. 21 (†DBo). On May 12 a pair of Mississippi Kites returned to the Des Moines, IA area (JCl, m.ob., ph.), and five were seen at South Hickman Bottoms, *Fulton*, KY May 20 (CPE). These observations are consistent with recent Regional expansion. Bald Eagle highlights included a maximum of 64 at Coralville Res., IA Mar. 4 (CE) and 13 nests containing eggs in Indiana (*vide* JCs). Late May N. Harrier sightings in *Dickinson*, *Palo Alto*, *Kossuth*, and *Johnson*, IA suggested possible nesting (*vide* TK). The return N. Goshawk flight was surprisingly strong for a non-invasion year, with 11 birds reported in Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio. In direct contrast to the seasonal trend of low migrant counts, an exceptional tally of 95 Red-shouldered Hawks was made Mar. 13 at Maumee Bay S.P., OH (LY). The only extralimital Swainson's Hawk was seen May 6 at Havana, IL (GW, RSA, m.ob.). The 29 Merlins reported in the Region was typical for recent spring flights. An imm. gray-morph Gyrfalcon reported during winter at Clinton L., IL was last seen Mar. 5, (†RCh, m.ob.). The Region's five Prairie Falcons were all in Iowa, where this species is rare but regular.

The spring rail flight was unusually strong e. of the Mississippi R. Indeed, it was an excellent year for Yellow Rails in Illinois, where a remarkable seven were reported between Mar. 25–May 2; the peak count was two at Clinton L. Dam Apr. 5 (RCh). The only Yellow Rail reported outside Illinois was at Salamonie Res., IN Apr. 23 (JMc). A Black Rail was reported at Bald Bluff, *Henderson*, IL May 9 (PP). King Rails were also well represented this spring, with five in Ohio, five in Illinois, and one in Indiana. Some 20 Virginia Rails were reported, typical for the Region. Fine Sora counts included 50 at Arcola, IL Apr. 28 (MD) and 22 along the Indiana lakefront Apr. 29 (JCD *et al.*). The only sizable Com. Moorhen count consisted of 21 at L.Cal., May 6 (WM). Otherwise this species remained scarce. One moorhen was discovered at L. Vega, KY May 3 (JK), where the species is rare. As the Region's Sandhill Crane population expands, isolated nesting has com-



Female Common Eider at Red Rock Reservoir, Iowa, February 28, 1995. This bird, which remained into early April, provided a second state record. Photograph/Reid Allen.

The tail was short, white and slightly forked, and the legs were black. The hood was dark gray with indistinct white splotches, and the bill was all dark which led me to conclude that this was a first-summer bird in alternate plumage.

Sabine's Gull is a casual fall migrant in the interior United States and, according to *Birds in Iowa*, the few birds to be found in spring and July are presumed to be migrating adults. A first-summer bird and a first summer date for Iowa made this sighting particularly significant. This was the second sighting of a Sabine's Gull in Dickinson County with the first being an immature bird photographed by Ed Thelen on 2 October 1996.

For me and the group of people attending the July Audubon chapter meeting, it was a rare summer gull experience times two!

518 W 4th Street, Spencer, IA 51301

PINE GROSBEEK IN IDA COUNTY

CURTIS L. RECTOR

At 2:15 p.m. on 5 November 1997, while driving my bus route, I saw a chunky, pinkish colored bird in a fruit tree near Somerset Apartments in Holstein. Its wings were black with white wingbars, and the beak was dark-colored, strong, and thick, suggesting that it was a grosbeak. The bird appeared to be quite tame as it continued consuming fruit from the tree. Due to the nature of my job, I could only watch it for a moment. After I finished my route, I checked a field guide and confirmed the bird's identity as an adult male Pine Grosbeak.

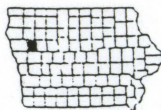


Fig. 1. Pine Grosbeak in Ida County.
6 Nov. 1997. Curtis Rector.

The next day, at 2:10 p.m., I saw the bird again in the same location and watched it for about five minutes as it ate fruit from the tree. This time I noticed a very bright patch of crimson on its rump near the base of the tail feathers. I saw the bird again at 3:45 p.m. and returned at 4:15 p.m. with my camera. I parked my car at the curb near the tree where the bird was feeding. I stayed in my car, rolled the window down, zoomed in at 210 mm., and took eight photos of the Pine Grosbeak, some as close as about 15 feet from where I was sitting. Fortunately, all eight photographs came out well and helped confirm my identification of the bird.

I saw the bird again several times on 7 November. It was still at the same location, feeding on some very small apples with fruits about 3/4 inches in diameter. This appears to be the first report of a Pine Grosbeak in Ida County and one of the few reports of the species in Iowa during the 1990s.

1531 Harvest Avenue, Holstein, IA 51025-8117

COMMON EIDER IN MARION COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



On 27 January 1995 I received a call from Tim Schantz about a female eider along the Des Moines River below the Red Rock Reservoir dam in Marion County. Jim Dinsmore and I arrived at 1:45 p.m. and quickly found the bird. We were able to study it at fairly close range until 3:05 p.m. with several other birders. When we left, we concurred with Schantz's conclusion that the bird was an adult female Common Eider.

The following description was written during the observation. The bird was a very large duck; it was longer, broader, and larger-headed than a Mallard. The bird had a pale head and sides and a dark back. The head was tan-colored with a dark line extending from the base of the upper mandible over the crown and down the back of the neck. There was a faint pale line above the eye. The cheek was pale-colored. The bill was longer than the length of the head, thick, and dark. The upper mandible had a flat surface. The upper surface of the bill was nearly flat with top of head, although there was a slight "bump" on the forehead. The bill had a slightly bulbous tip. Feathering extended down the sides of the upper mandible to a point just posterior to the nostril. The eye was dark and positioned near the top of the head. The throat and chin appeared pale tan-colored. The breast was tan with darker (black/dark brown), narrow, horizontal barring. There was a sharp line of contrast between the pale throat and the barred breast. The flanks were also tan with darker vertical barring. This vertical barring was continuous, unlike the darker chevrons that mark the flanks of female and immature King Eiders. The back and upperwings were very dark brown/black. When the bird flapped its wings, I noted that both surfaces of the wing were dark and had no visible wingbars or patches. The axillars were white. The vent was also barred, the pattern appearing similar to that on the flanks. The rectrices were dark brown/black, with at least the central two feathers appearing worn. Based on these features, the bird was identified as a Common Eider in female or immature plumage. The prominent dark barring on the flanks and breast, coupled with the molt

pattern of the tail and lack of pale tips to the wing coverts, indicate the bird was an adult female in eclipse plumage. Based on the very pale color on the head and flanks, we identified this bird as the pacific subspecies *v-nigra*. The eastern subspecies *nigricens* typically shows a large amount of reddish-brown color on the head and flanks, very unlike the color of this bird.



Fig. 1. Common Eider at Red Rock Reservoir, 29 Feb. 1995. Reid Allen.

The eider remained at this location through 7 April 1995 (*Iowa Bird Life* 65:71, 1995) and was seen by many. This represents the second confirmed record of a Common Eider for Iowa. The other record is of a specimen taken on 1 November 1901 near Sioux City, Woodbury County (DuMont 1934). There are a few earlier reports that lack adequate descriptions.

612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521



Common Eider ٩٥٥١ P-0443
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
29 Feb 1995 Reid Allen

< >016 19+00 2BB1N-04AU 863

Common Eider ٩٥٥١ P-0443
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
29 Feb 1995 Reid Allen

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Common Eider ٩٥٥١ P-0443
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
29 Feb 1995 Reid Allen

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American Eider

Somateria mollissima dresseri
(so-ma-té-ri-a, mo-lis-i-ma, dréss-e-ri)

Colour Plates Nos. 24 and 29. Downy Young No. 34.

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Somateria, from Greek, *somatos*, meaning the body, and *erion*, meaning wool, down (referring to the down of the body); *mollissima*, Latin, meaning very soft, referring to the softness of the down; *dresseri*, in honour of Henry E. Dresser (1838-1915), celebrated English ornithologist, who published "Birds of Europe" in 9 volumes, 1871-81.

COLLOQUIAL NAMES

IN GENERAL USE: Sea-duck, very often sea-ducks and drakes, sometimes shortened to ducks and drakes. IN LOCAL USE: Big sea-duck; canvasback; black-and-white coot; Eskimo duck; Isle-of-shoals duck; laying duck; looby; metik (Eskimo name); moyac; moyak; passing birds; pied wamp; sea-coot; shoal duck; shoreyer; squam duck; squaw duck; wamp.

DESCRIPTION

ADULT MALE. WINTER PLUMAGE: *Head.* Forehead, region around eye and crown, iridescent glossy black, crown divided along middle by white streak originating in hindhead; *cheek, chin, throat and neck*, white; *hindhead*, sea green, this colour extending forward narrowly under black cap almost to bill (in the Northern Eider this line of colour does not extend as far forward); narrow, indistinct line of white down side of head; *eye*, brown; *bill*, variable, from grey to green, in spring, orange yellow; *nail*, almost white, fused with bill and forming entire tip of upper mandible; *bill-processes* (fig. 51), from each side of base of bill a leathery process extends well up into forehead and terminates in broad, rounded tip (those of Northern Eider, much narrower, end in sharp, pointed tips), these processes divided by thin line of feathering on culmen; feathering of head, at lores, extends forward on upper mandible to below hind end of nostril, and is sharp-pointed terminally (similar feathering on bill of Northern Eider does not extend as far towards nostril). *Body.* Back and scapulars, white to creamy white; *chest*, white, tinged with pale creamy brown; *rump*, black, with white patches on flanks; *breast, belly and sides*, black; *feet*, yellow or green, *webs* dusky. *Tail and its coverts*, black. *Wings.* Lesser and middle coverts, white, dusky along forward edge of wing; *greater coverts*, black, in some cases with white tips, or occasionally with central feathers white or mottled white and greyish; *primaries*, black; *outer secondaries*, black; *inner secondaries*, white, and sickle-shaped; *tertials*, white; *lining*, grey and white; *axillars*, white.

ECLIPSE PLUMAGE: The moult into the eclipse



FIG. 51.—Bill-processes of the Eiders. Top, American Eider. Middle, Northern Eider. Bottom, Pacific Eider.

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95-01

TO: Tom Kent, IOU Records Committee

FROM: Bob Cecil

SUBJECT: Common Eiders in Captivity

I had hoped to have more information on the Common Eiders in captive collections by this time, but have not been entirely successful in my efforts. I did visit a collector* near Big Creek State Park in Polk County who had a pair of Common Eiders. As you may recall, this was the location of the Sailorville CBC Sandhill Crane a few years ago. I will preface my remarks by saying that the collector was highly knowledgeable about waterfowl in general and had an extensive collection of literature dealing with them. I discussed with him the several subspecies and he was conversant with all of them.

I asked the collector about the frequency of Common Eiders in captivity. He said that, for a number of reasons, they were very rare. They are heat intolerant, susceptible to disease, and there is not much of a captive breeding pool. He added that he was aware of only three owners of Common Eiders in the Mississippi flyway, including himself. Based upon this, it was his opinion that it would be highly unlikely that the bird(s) in question would be escapees, adding that he, personally, had lost none.

I do not have a camera and did not photograph the birds. I made a rough sketch of the bird's bill, but, looking back on the sketch, felt that my artistry was so bad that it would not contribute to this discussion in any meaningful way. I hope to obtain photos of the birds in the near future.

With Francis Moore, I visited another waterfowl collector near Waterloo. While he did not have Eiders, he did concur that Eiders were rare in captivity for some of the reasons stated above.

I will report back to you when I have photos and/or more information.

As an aside, it has become clear to me that there are a large number of waterfowl collectors in Iowa alone, not to mention elsewhere in the U.S. The Waterloo collector estimated that Iowa has about 400 collectors. Many do not become heavily involved in North American migratory species due to licensing and reporting requirements (which they deeply resent), although there are a number that do. For example, Polk County collector had a large number of species that breed in or migrate through Iowa.

*I misplaced the collector's card, so I do not have his name. I will have it for my next communication to you.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Common Eider

Number: 1 adult female

Location: Des Moines River below Red Rock dam, Marion Co., IA

Habitat: open stretch of river

Date: 27 January 1995

Time: 1:45-3:05 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: Jim Dinsmore, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): The bird was a very large duck, longer, broader, and larger-headed than a Mallard. The bird had a pale head and sides and a dark back. The head was tan-colored with a dark line extending from the base of the upper mandible over the crown and down the back of the neck. There was a faint pale line above the eye. Cheek pale. The bill was dark. The bill was quite long and thick, longer than the length of the head. The upper mandible had a flat surface. Upper surface of bill nearly flat with top of head, though there was a slight "bump" on the forehead. Tip of bill had a slightly bulbous tip. Feathering extended down the sides of the upper mandible to a point just posterior to the nostril. Eye was dark and positioned near the top of the head. Throat and chin appeared pale tan-colored. There was a sharp line of contrast between the pale throat and the barred breast. Breast tan with darker (black/dark brown), narrow horizontal barring. Flanks also tan with darker vertical barring. Vertical barring was continuous, unlike the darker chevrons that mark the flanks of female/immature King Eiders. Back and upperwings were very dark brown/black. When the bird flapped its wings, I noted that both surfaces of the wing were dark and unmarked (no visible wingbars or patches). The axillars were white. Vent area was also barred as on flanks. Rectrices were dark brown/black, with at least the central two feathers appearing worn. Based on these features, the bird was identified as a Common Eider in female or immature plumage. The prominent dark barring on the flanks and breast, coupled with the molt pattern of the tail and lack of pale tips to the wing coverts indicate the bird was an adult female in eclipse plumage. Based on the very pale color on the head and flanks, I would tentatively identify this bird as the western subspecies *v-nigra*. The eastern subspecies *nigricens* typically shows a large amount of reddish-brown color on the head and flanks, very unlike the color of this bird.

Similar species and how eliminated: See above discussion. Steller's Eider eliminated by size. Female and immature King Eider eliminated by pattern of barring on flanks, size of bill, position of eye, faint white supercilium, and pattern of feathering on bill. Spectacled Eider eliminated by facial pattern and bill shape.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with overcast skies and intermittent light drizzle. Estimated viewing distance was about 40 meters when we arrived, but the bird moved downstream offering views from 75-100 meters. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Have recent experience with both species of eiders from North Carolina (<15 individuals of each species in last 3 years).

95-01

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America
 Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America

How long before field notes made: written during observation

How long before this form completed: completed 7 p.m. 27 January

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Common Eider **How many?** one

Location? Des Moines River just below Red Rock Dam, Marion Co.

When? date(s): 27 January 1995 **Time:** . 2-3 p.m.

Who? your name and address Jim Dinsmore

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames 50014

Others with you Steve Dinsmore, Tim Schantz, Tom Kent, Pam and Reid Allen, Eloise and Eugene Armstrong, Jim and Karol Fuller

Describe the bird(s)

Overall, a fairly large, dark looking duck. It was compared directly with several Mallards and was slightly larger than them. I concentrated my views to looking at head and sides of body and noted little else about the bird. The bird was largely dark brown (but not a chestnut brown as in some subspecies of eider) with fairly distinct vertical dark stripes on its sides. The neck and head were largely a much lighter colored brown, more a light tan, again with no hint of chestnut color. The exceptions to this were a dark brown line through the eye and a dark brown patch on top of the head that extended back onto the neck and forward to above somewhat in front of the eye. The bill showed a fairly straight, almost Canvasback-like profile and might have been somewhat expanded (globular) at the tip. There was a fairly light stripe above the eye. I could not see the nostril well but the feathering on the head appeared to extend far forward toward the bill.

Similar species and how eliminated: King Eider-vertical rather than V-shaped markings on sides, head markings and color pattern seemed to fit the western subspecies of Common Eider. The feather arrangement on side of head was consistent with Common Eider but admittedly was not seen well.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? no

Viewing conditions: overcast with poor light, bird an estimated 50-75 yards away, viewed with 20-40 scope and binoculars

Previous experience with this species: Limited but have seen it on east coast a number of times

References and persons consulted: Natl. Geographic Guide, Peterson Field guide

How long before field notes made? field notes and sketch made in field

this form completed? next day



Crude sketch
traced from original

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Common Eider; **Number:** 1 female

Location: Red Rock Reservoir, below dam, Marion Co., IA

Date: 27 January 1995; **Time:** 2:10 to 3:00 p.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: Tim Schantz in a.m., with me were Steve and Jim Dinsmore, Jim and Karole Fuller, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, and Reid and Pam Allen.

Habitat and circumstances: Open river below dam swimming with Mallards.

Description of bird: Slightly longer than Mallard with less bulk to body. Overall, a brown bird with no hint of reddish coloration. The head and bill were elongated with long, straight culmen. Feathering extended along the side of the bill to the nostril. The eye was dark and high on the head. The feathering extended on the culmen about halfway from the eye to the tip of the bill. I could not see the fork in the upper mandible on the culmen --- it appeared to come to a point on the culmen. The bill had a small bulbous tip which appeared slightly yellow-orange at close range. The top of the head was darker black-brown and this extended onto the nape as a narrow dark central area. There was a lighter line over the eye and a thinner dark line from the eye extending posteriorly and down toward the neck. The back was darker, like the top of the head, without evident feather edging. The neck and breast were soft brown. The sides were lighter than the back and had prominent dark vertical lines. I saw a small white patch in the axillars when the bird raised its wing. The tail was half cocked and short. The central tail feathers were slightly shorter and appeared frayed. I did not see the legs or feet. The bird was swimming with Mallards and appeared to be surface feeding. I did not see it dive. For a while it rested on a small island.

Voice: Not heard.

Similar species: The separation of female Common and King eiders is notoriously difficult. There are very few records of Common Eider from the midwest. Michigan, for example, accepts only one. Other states discount records that are not well substantiated. Based on the head and bill shape, feathering in relation to the bill, and vertical marks on the sides, I have no hesitation in calling this a Common rather than a King Eider. It appears to be an adult female based on the well developed markings and tail wear. Females of the western subspecies, *Somateria mollissima v-nigra*, are best separated from the eastern subspecies, *S. m. dresseri*, based on bill and facial feathering, but also tend to be overall pale brown rather than rusty brown. This bird appeared pale brown rather than rusty brown to me. I believe that the feathering on the side of the bill was rounded at the apex rather than pointed. Most impressive to me was the lack of prominent bill extension toward the eye and lateral to the culmen. In fact, I could not see any. I suspect that there must have been a narrow extension as shown for *S. m. v-nigra*, that I could not separate from facial feathering in the dull light.

Any one have reservations?: No.

Light: Heavy overcast with light mist; **Distance:** 30 to 200 yards (est); **Optics:** 10x binocular and zoom Kowas.

Previous experience: My most relevant experience was with the King Eiders at De Soto N.W.R. on 10 Nov 1985 and subsequent research (Kent, T.H. 1987. Eiders in Iowa. *Iowa Bird Life* 57:88-93). I have seen Common Eiders in Maine and Alaska and King Eiders in Iowa and Alaska.

References before/after viewing: Looked at National Geographic Guide while studying the bird. Field Notes made before looking at book.

Time of notes: After first viewing; **Final typing:** 1 day.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

95-01

SPECIES: Common Eider (Female v-nigra)

1

LOCATION: Des Moines River a half mile below Red Rock Reservoir Dam (Marion County).

DATE & TIME: 27 January, 1995 (2:05-2:55PM) and 2 February, 1995 (10:30-11:30 AM).

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHERS: Discovered by Tim Schantz. Others there included T. Kent, J. & S. Dinsmore. P. & R. Allen, E. & E. Armstrong. MOB later.

BACKGROUND: Tim Schantz reported the bird to the Iowa Birdline at 11:30 AM on 27 January. When I arrived a number of people were already watching the bird from the section of the old iron bridge which remains. The bird was with Mallards below the bridge.

DESCRIPTION: General size compared to the Mallards was about the same to a little bit larger. The generally brown bird was really different from the Mallard females when the head and bill shapes were compared. From the top of the flat head to the tip of the bill was a relatively long distance, and was straight and rather evenly sloped slightly downhill. The eye was dark and set very near the top of the head. The upper part of the bill began just in front of the eye. Beneath it, the feathering extended to just under the nostril, and there was not much bill in front of the nostril. The rather sharp tip of the gray bill appeared to be yellow-orange. There was a dark cap on the otherwise light tan head, and there was a dark line extending behind the eye, and a light eye line just above the eye. The back and folded wings were a darker brownish-black, and exhibited very subtle feather edgings. The breast was streaked horizontally and darker than the head, with a rather sharp separation between the two areas. The sides beneath the wing were lighter tan with wavy vertical barring. The tail was short and dark, and made up of stiff appearing feathers with the central feathers more worn than the outer ones. Under the tail was rather light with darker spotting. The legs were a gray-brown color. When the bird spread its wings, there was a rather unique somewhat circular white patch in each axillary area.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Bill and head shape eliminate any female puddle duck. Female King Eider has shorter bill, generally smaller size, should be more rusty than tan, and has chevrons on its sides beneath the wings, not wavy vertical markings. Steller's Eider is much smaller, and female Spectacled Eider shows the spectacle outlines on the face.

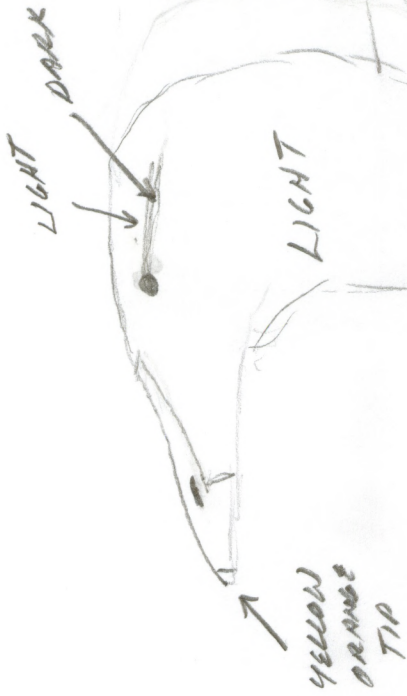
VIEWING CONDITIONS & OPTICS: Both days were heavily overcast, and there was light fog as well on the 27th. The bird was viewed from distances of 40-80 yards with a KOWA TSN-4 telescope with 20-60X zoom lens.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen numerous Common Eiders on both coasts and in Alaska. I have also seen the other three eider species in Alaska.

FIELD NOTES & REFERENCES: Field notes were made in car after viewing, as was the diagram attached. National Geographic Field Guide, as well as Harrison's Seabirds were viewed at the time of sighting. This form was typed on February 8th.

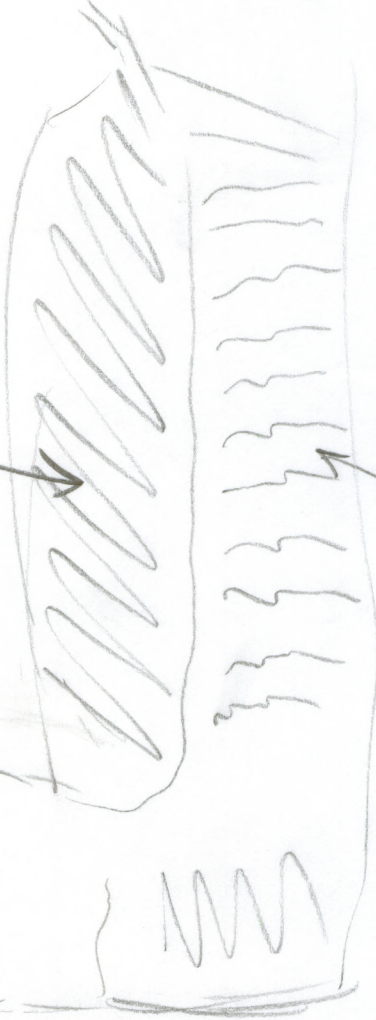
♀ COEI

DARK CAP



BROWNISH
BLACK SUBTLE
WITH FEATHER
EDGINGS

TAIL
SHORT+STIFF
WORN



VERTICAL BARRING
LIGHTER
THAN
BACK
AND
WINGS

BELOW RED ROCK DAM

1/27/95, 2/2/95

95-01
JIM
FULLER

95-01

DOCUMENTATION

SPECIES: **Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) Female**

HOW MANY: 1

LOCATION: Des Moines River, Marion County, Iowa approximately 1/2 mile below Red Rock Dam

HABITAT: Shallow river with rock, sandbars, and snags

DATE: 27 January, 29 January, & 24 February 1995

TIME & LENGTH OF
OBSERVATION: 1/27/95: 2pm-3pm 1/29/95: 10:45am-11:15am 2/24/95: 3pm-4:30pm

FIRST OBSERVATION
MADE BY: Tim Schantz

DOCUMENTER'S NAME &
ADDRESS: Reid Allen, 1601 Pleasant Street,
West Des Moines, IA 50265

OTHERS WHO SAW BIRD: 1/27/95: Steve Dinsmore, Tom Kent, Jim Fuller, Eugene & Eloise Armstrong, and Pam Allen

DESCRIPTION OF BIRD: This was a large, long-profile (in the water), plump (out of the water), light to medium brown duck with dark barring. The most prominent feature was the slope of the forehead and the long bill. The shield of the bill extended well up the forehead and appeared to be rounded about 1 inch ahead of the eye, suggestive of the eastern race (*S. m. Dresseri*). It was aqua-colored with a darker tip. The head sloped sharply from the crown to the nape. There was a lighter color to the superciliary - perhaps this was a first-winter female. The body was brown, with dark barring. The flanks were barred vertically. The axillars were white.

The duck was comfortable around the abundant Mallard pairs, but did dive to feed. It became very wary with fishermen on the riverbank and flew when approached by a motor boat.

SIMILAR SPECIES AND
VIEWING CONDITIONS: Female King Eiders have shorter bills and crescent-shaped barring on the flanks.
Overcast sky with mist and light snow (27 Jan 95) to sunny (24 Feb 95)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE
WITH SPECIES: None.

EQUIPMENT: Kowa TSN-4 spotting scope; Bushnell 8x36 Custom Binoculars.
Minolta x-700 with f10.3 800mm adapter to Kowa

REFERENCES CONSULTED: THE AUDUBON SOCIETY MASTER GUIDE TO BIRDING,
Vol 1, 1983. WESTERN BIRDS, Peterson Field Guide #2, Roger Tory Peterson, 1990

HOW LONG BEFORE
FIELD NOTES MADE: Immediately upon leaving sighting. **(Note/Drawing Enclosed)**

HOW LONG BEFORE THIS
FORM COMPLETED: March 5, 1995.

95-01

**DOCUMENTATION FORM
UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS IN IOWA**

Species: Common Eider

Location: Red Rock Dam, Marion Co., Iowa

Habitat: open river

Date: 28 January, 1995 **Time:** 14:15 to 15:10

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

Other Observers: found by Tim Schantz; seen by many observers

Description of bird: This brown duck was larger than the nearby Mallards. The immediately obvious feature was sloping forehead and large bill. The head feathers and bill were basically the same color making distinction between the two nearly impossible. The bird was essentially all brown but it had distinctive but subtle markings. The vermiculations on the flanks were definitely vertical, not chevron shaped. There were dark centers to the scapulars, creating a nice pattern. The head was a lighter brown. There was fine vertical barring on the breast. Bill, eye, and legs and feet were dark. The tail was stubby and stiff.

Diving behavior differed from other diving ducks. Rather than leaping head-first into the water, this bird would dive by lowering her head and sinking into the water. Bubbles on the surface indicated that she was stirring the bottom. She usually resurfaced near the spot of the dive.

Similar species and how eliminated: King Eider could be eliminated by the extreme slope to the head, degree of feathering at the base of the bill, and the vertical flank streaking.

Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics): Bright, overcast sky. Viewed through binoculars and scope at 15X - 30X at distances of 100 feet to 150 yards.

Previous experience: Have observed eiders on the East Coast and in Churchill.

References consulted during observation: NGS guide

References consulted before completing documentation: NGS guide

Field notes made: During observation

Documentation completed: Same day

The bird was again observed 18 February. Observation through a Questar at fairly close range still did not allow for good delineation of bill and feathering color. This is evidently a tough field mark to see.

What species? Common Eider ♀ How many? 1Location? Red Rock Reservoir — (Marion Co.)Type of habitat? Open River channel below damWhen? date(s): Jan. 28, 1995 time: 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdt, Ross Silcock, BJ Rose, Tim Gedler, Tom Stoneothers before or after you: Tim Schantz, Dinsmores, Armstrongs, Allens, Ann Johnson,

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

This large duck was with the mallards and was bulkier than the mallards. It had barring all over on its flanks and breast. It had a light brown head color, and the color of the body was a darker light brown. It was darker brown on the forehead. It was of the "nigra" subspecies. It had a grayish-type bill and a long sloping head. It had a long bill which went a long ways up the head from the nostril. It had a stubby tail, and it had no bands on its thick legs. A white area by its wings showed a couple times when it flapped its wings. We had great looks at it on nearby logs and swimming around. It looked like a chunky duck when on a log. It was a beautiful duck!

Similar species and how eliminated: A ♀ King Eider has a more rounded head and crescent or V-shaped markings on sides and scapulars which this duck did not. It had evenly barred sides and scapulars and the sloping forehead. A ♀ Spectacled Eider has the spectacle pattern and a short bill.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain: :

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Mostly cloudy, distances estimated at 20-25 yards away, good viewing,
8X30 Binocs and 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen female Common Eiders in Maine and Churchill and Alaska.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geographic's Birds of N. America.How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? Feb. 16, 1995

and at
9:15 p.m. Jan. 28th

95-01

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What Species? Common Eider, female

How many? 1

Location? Des Moines River below Red Rock Dam, Marion Co.

Type of Habitat? River

When? January 29, 1995, 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Who? Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317

Others with you: Chris Caster, Pete Wickham, John Daniel, Pam Allen, Reid Allen

Others before or after you:

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Similar in size to nearby male Mallards; straightly sloping forehead and bill; large-bodied; bill dark gray or blackish; feathering extended on sides of bill in horizontal "V" shape to nostril; eye dark; head, neck, upper back and breast light brown; darker brown forehead and streak behind eye, extending to rear of crown; breast very finely barred; sides light brown with dark brown vertical barring; scapulars barred or checkered with dark brown; primaries, secondaries and tail dark brown; underwings gray with whitish axillaries; rump and undertail coverts brown. While swimming, it appeared to ride lower in the water than Mallards. No vocalizations were heard. It was seen swimming, feeding, resting and preening with a flock of Mallards.

Similar species; how eliminated: Female King Eider has rounder forehead, less feathering on sides of bill, and "V"-shaped barring on sides.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

Viewing conditions: Sunlight from the side; distance varied between 20-100 yards; viewed with 8 x 40 binoculars and 15x - 45x telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No previous experience with Common Eider; very familiar with regularly-occurring Iowa waterfowl.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America.

How long before field notes made? Immediately after observation.

How long before this form completed? Immediately after observation.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

95-01

What species? Common Eider - ♀ How many? 1

Location? Des Moines R. below Red Rock Dam, Marion Co. IA

Type of Habitat? open river

When? date(s): Jan 30, 1995 time: 8:15 AM to

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport, IA 52803

Others with you: Brian Blevins

Others before or after you: Tim Schantz, m.o.b.,

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Bird seen in flight - very large "fat" duck, dull brown plumage banded evenly on side of body, wing showed narrow white along front of speculum, grey underwing. Grey bill coming back nearly to eye, with feathers extending forward along lower head to create a short bill "tip".
Body very heavy.



Similar species; how eliminated: King Eider - Bill profile much different. King showing more normal bill with more "tip." Underwing paler grey in King.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. 10x40 Zeiss binocs. sun behind obs., bird flew by, 40m at closest (est.)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen e. race in Maine + Canada, also 1. in race in Alaska.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 5 min. this form completed? 4 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

95-01

Species: Common Eider (female) Number: 1

Location: Iron bridge below Redrock Dam Marion Co. IA.

Observer: Ray Cummins

Others before/with/after: w/ Tom Johnson

Date: 02/03/95 Time Bird Seen: 10:00am to 11:00am

Habitant & circumstances: Open river

Description: Large heavy brown duck slightly larger than the twenty or so mallard hens present. The bird had a long dark gray slanted bill similar to a Canvasback. The upper mandible being much longer than the lower. The feathers of the face extend to the nostrils where the upper and lower mandible formed a V. The crown was light brown almost cream colored and somewhat bulbous making it stand out. The head, nape, chest, wing coverts, and sides were brown much the same color as the mallard hen, but slightly darker. The side were mark with straight narrow black bars. The primaries, secondaries, lower back, and tail were black. The axillaries were white which is not nesarilly supportive of Common Eider, but would be more supportive of King Eider.

Description of voice: N/H.

Similarly appearing species: The bill shape, size, and side pattern is that of a Common Eider. The white axillaries seem to be more supportive of a King Eider, but in my mind this was deffinitely a Common Eider.

Distance (how measured): 25yds to 75yds estimate

Optical equipment: Kowa 20-60x Spotting Scope

Light: excellent

Previous experience with species: Have seen a few in Maine many years ago

Anyone have reservations?: no.

Books and references: none

Time of field notes: 3 days Final typing: 3 days

Signature: Raymond L. Cummins Address: 609 S. Main St.

Date: 02-07-95

Centerville, Ia. 52544

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

95-01

What species? Common Eider How many? 1 female

Location? Iron bridge below Red Rock dam, Marion County. IA

Type of Habitat? River

When? date(s): Feb. 1, 1995 time: 4:15 P.M to 4:30 PM

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil 1315 41st St. Des Moines, IA 50311

Others with you: None

Others before or after you: About everyone

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I looked for the bird for about fifteen minutes without finding it. Just as I was about to give up, it came waddling out like a barnyard duck from under the bridge. Light was fading, so I could not make out the fine points of the bill and adjacent feathering.

Overall, the bird was dark brown. The culmen was straight, and the eyes were set back well in the head. The sides of the bird were covered with continuous bars, curving towards the front. The breast was covered with finer horizontal barring which, like the sides, was darker brown than the background plumage. The back of the bird was darker overall than the sides. I observed the bird flap its wings once briefly, and noticed white at the base. It appeared that the first two or three secondaries were white. Overall, the bird was about the size of the largest mallards, which were nearby for direct comparison.

My final observations were of behavior. It was feeding on small pools of melted water on the surface of the ice. As it did so, it squirted water out from the sides of its mandibles. Do all ducks do this?? It then entered the water, and began dabbling like a Mallard; tail up, head under the water. And I thought Eiders were diving ducks.

Similar species; how eliminated: Continuous barring along sides supposedly eliminates King Eider. The presence of Barring along sides and the bill shape (not described) eliminates other ducks.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? Don't think so.

If yes, explain: BUT, I discussed the bird with John Hoogerheide who was in Iowa and went to see the bird. He said that the exotic waterfowl collector near Sailorville had Common

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Eiders. This was the place where the Sandhill Crane was.
10X binocs. 20x scope. Viewing conditions less than optimal

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? during obser-
vation this form completed? 1 week

Send complete form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

95-07

Diane Porter
908 East Briggs
Fairfield, IA 52556
(515) 472-7256

Documentation of Sighting

Date of Report
3/2/95

Common Eider in Iowa

Sighting Date: 2/18/95
Species: Common Eider
Scientific Name: *Somateria mollissima*
Number Seen: 1
Place: Des Moines River
City:
County: Marion
State: IA
Nation: USA
Habitat: River shallows
Record Number: 3169

The duck was brown all over, slightly larger than the Mallards with whom she napped on the shore of the river below the Iron Bridge at Red Rock Reservoir. Her sides were brown-and-white barred. Her head differed from the Mallards' in that it sloped more smoothly to her large, long bill (sort of like a Trumpeter Swan, but not so extreme). The feathers of her cheek came forward onto the sides of the bill in a point which ended nearly even with her nostril. Her breast was somewhat lighter than her head and neck, which surprised me. Her behavior was extraordinary.

She foraged something like a dabbler, but not quite. She upended and then churned the water violently with her feet. I think she was deliberately making turbulence to bring up food. Sometimes she dived and then made a lot of commotion underwater, which made a ring of roiling (but not bubbling) water on the surface. From how the disturbance stayed in the same place, you could tell she wasn't swimming around but staying in the same location. I think she would go to or near to the bottom and then fan about to dislodge whatever she wanted to eat that lived in the mud.

A group of 12 birders from Fairfield saw her. She was a life bird for all of us. We examined her for a long time through binocs and Kowa and Questar scopes. Distance: well, she swam so close to the bridge she almost disappeared under it. The day was clear and not too windy. We had about as good a look as you could hope for.

Other observers. Ann Johnson spotted the bird and pointed her out to the rest of us.