

Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

A bird of fast-moving water, the Harlequin Duck breeds on fast-flowing streams and winters along rocky coastlines in the crashing surf.

Keys to Identification

Adult Description

Medium-sized diving duck. White patch in front of eyes. Round white ear spot. Male dark slate-blue with reddish brown sides and odd white patches and spots. Female dusky brown with two or three round white spots on head.

Male Description

Body plumage slate-blue; white bands and collars, bordered with black lines, on chest and neck; large white crescent in front of eye; small white circular patch near ear; white vertical stripe along side of neck; black streak, bordered by white and amber lines, on top of head; iridescent blue secondaries; rich dark slate-blue belly; chestnut-brown flanks.

Female Description

Brown body. White belly, with brown checks or spots. Round white spot behind ear. Faded variable white patches in front of eye. Occasionally white streaks on back of head.

Immature Description

Similar to adult female, but with darker belly.



Cool Facts

- More than half of eastern North American population of Harlequin Ducks winters in coastal Maine, particularly outer reaches of Penobscot and Jericho bays.
- When engaged in behavioral interactions, the Harlequin Duck gives distinctly unducklike squeaks, the source of one of its local names: sea mouse.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 13 - 21.3 inches
- Wingspan - 22 - 26 inches
- Weight - 17.6 - 25.6 ounces