

Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

STATUS	Endangered 	Vulnerable 
Special Concern 	Endangered 	Not Listed 



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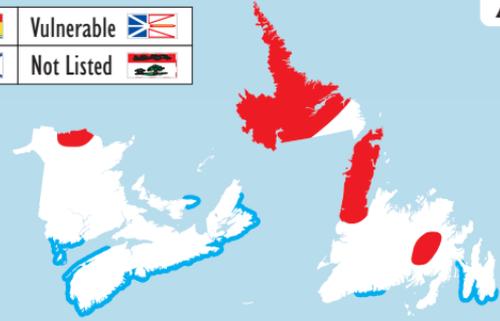
Species Description

The Harlequin Duck is small (33-54 cm) and looks dark coloured from afar. Males are slate blue with chestnut sides, and have white streaks on the neck and along the back. Females are brownish grey. Both sexes have a round white spot behind their eyes and a white patch near the base of the bill. They have relatively long tails. Juveniles look similar to females, but have darker bellies.



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Breed along northern rivers and winter along southern coasts of Atlantic Canada and Greenland. Only 2000 - 3000 individuals winter in eastern North America.



Habitat

Breeds in well-concealed locations along fast flowing streams and rivers in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, Greenland and Iceland; with occasional breeding records for New Brunswick. Congregates in coastal marine areas near rocky shorelines or subtidal ledges in southern Atlantic Canada and Greenland. Found close to the shore in turbulent places where the surf breaks against the rocks and there are low levels of ice.



© MEGAN COOVLLEY



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Harlequin Ducks are typically observed from November until April in turbulent areas along the coast, and rarely seen in their summer breeding habitat.

Interesting Points

- Often return to the same wintering location every year.
- Also known as “lords and ladies” and “sea mice” because of their showy appearance and squeaky mouse-like call.
- The term *Harlequin* describes a character in Italian comedies who wears a black mask and a brightly coloured costume.



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Similar Species

Female and juvenile Harlequins may be confused with:

Surf Scoter (photo) & Black Scoter:

Larger (43-60 cm); large bulbous bill; females have a white spot on back of neck.



© ALAN WILSON

Female

Long-tailed Duck:

Often in same habitat; similar size (38-58 cm); lighter-coloured heads; males have long tail feathers.



© JUS PMS

Female

In flight, Harlequins travel in tightly packed groups while other ducks have a more loose formation. In the water they are typically close to the shore in tight groups.

Threats to Survival

- Wintering grounds: oil/bilge contamination, human disturbance (on the shore and boating), subsistence and illegal hunting, fisheries bycatch, and aquaculture operations.
- Breeding grounds: hydro developments, forestry activities, resource extraction, and human disturbance.



How You Can Help

Watch from a distance to ensure that this species can feed in the safest and best coastal areas. Hunters can familiarize themselves with the plumage of females and juveniles so they are not mistaken for other species. Contact the Coast Guard (1-800-565-1633 for Maritimes, or 1-800-563-9089 for NL) if coastal oil spills or bilge dumps are observed.



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Wild for Waterfowl survey

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports

Contact: EC (506) 364-5044 ext. 5060 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca, www.hww.ca, Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: www.mba-aom.ca

Sighting Reports: eBird.org

Stewardship: Join NCC & BSC's Wild for Waterfowl Count: 1-877-231-4400 & 902-426-4055