



THE HARLEQUIN DUCK ON THE COAST OF ESSEX COUNTY, MASS.

In the "Birds of Essex County," published in 1905, I was able to give only three records of the Harlequin Duck for the County. These were all from mounted specimens. Two were in the Essex County collection of the Peabody Museum of Salem, one a male from Baker's Island, without date; the other a young male from Marblehead, dated Nov. 11, 1883. The third, also a male, from Swampscott, dated Nov. 20, 1877, was in the collection of the Brookline, Mass., High School. In the "Supplement," published in 1920, I was unable to add any more records, but I have had recently an interesting experience, which is worth recording.

On March 4, 1922, in company with several friends, I took the steamer from Boston running to Gloucester. The Captain, at our request, steamed close to Half-way Rock, a small rocky islet rising abruptly from the sea to a height of about fifty feet. The Rock lies two miles off Marblehead, about half-way between Boston Outer Light and Gloucester. In addition to a Common Cormorant and two or more Purple Sandpipers, we started from this rock two small ducks, which I believe were Harlequins. One of these flew wildly about the rock and over the water astern of us, not scaling close to the surface, but rising and falling and turning this way and that, so we were able to see both its back and breast. In the dull light of a cloudy day we were unable, even with 8-power binoculars, to detect any colors or markings, and the duck looked uniformly dull gray or black. Its size, shape and method of flight excluded at once the American Scoter and the Black Duck. I am fairly familiar with the Harlequin Duck on the Labrador coast. The female and young look uniformly dark above and below and on the wings, with the exception of a variable amount of white near the eye, and this it is often difficult to see on a bird in flight.

Knight, in "The Birds of Maine," said of the Harlequin, in 1908: "They were formerly common along the coast from November until March and April, but now occur only in the extreme winter months in limited numbers among the outer surf-beaten ledges and islands of our Eastern coast."

It is possible the Harlequin has been frequenting this outlying Essex County rock.

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