

SPECIES AT RISK

in New Brunswick



Harlequin Duck

Scientific name: *Histrionicus
histrionicus*

N.B. Status: Endangered

Harlequin Duck

Description & Biology

The Harlequin Duck is a small migratory duck with distinctive colours and patterns. Adult males are readily identified by their vivid blue-grey plumage, chestnut flanks, and pronounced white patches on their head, neck and breast. The females are dusky brown with white patches behind, below, and in front of each eye. Harlequin Ducks do not develop adult plumage until they are two years old.

Habitat & Survival

Harlequin Ducks forage in turbulent waters. In the winter, they can be found along the coast on exposed rocky shores and offshore ledges, where molluscs and crustaceans are their main food. During their breeding season, which is spring-summer, they migrate to northern, fast-flowing rivers. They build their nests along these river shores where they feed mainly on the larvae of aquatic insects. The nesting season is in the spring, from May to June, and they lay between four to eight eggs.

Harlequin Ducks return to the same wintering area each year. Protecting these sites is an important step in conserving the species.

Distribution

With a few exceptions, the Harlequin Duck is found in New Brunswick only during the winter. There are two main wintering sites in New Brunswick, which are both in the Bay of Fundy. In addition, small groups of wintering Harlequin Ducks can be found in other areas along the Fundy coast.

A few recent reports exist of Harlequin Ducks breeding on rivers in northern New Brunswick. The bulk of the breeding population is found further north, on rivers in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Harlequin Duck occurs on both the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts. The eastern or Atlantic Coast population breeds in northeastern Canada and Greenland. They winter as far south as northeastern United States.

NB Distribution of
Harlequin Duck

