

Report Banded Harlequin Ducks

Hundreds of Harlequin Ducks have been marked with colour leg bands over the last 25 years in western North America, including in Banff National Park. The band may be on either leg and may be in a variety of colours, depending on where the band was attached. The other leg will have a silver aluminum band. The colour band will have a 2-digit code (in a variety of contrasting colours) bearing any combination of letters and numbers. The combination of background colour, code colour and digit combination is unique in North America and allows researchers to identify individual birds, which can help to connect breeding streams and coastal moulting/wintering areas, estimate population sizes and monitor survival rates of individual birds.

Harlequin Ducks frequently haul out on rocks, logs or stream banks to loaf after feeding, at which time the band will be visible. At these times it is possible to read the leg band with the aid of a spotting scope or high-resolution camera.

Tips to Successful Band Reading (and see examples below)

- Record if the bird is a male or a female.
- Note the colour of the band.
- Note the contrasting colour of the letter/number code.
- Read the code from the foot upwards towards the body.
- Be patient and await the right opportunity as too much movement may disturb the bird.
- Ideal viewing distance is about 40 m but up to 80 m is possible under the right light.
- Try to view bands with the sun behind you to reduce shadow and contrast.

Report band information to:

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male, left leg black 83 on yellow
female, left leg white AH on blue

female, left leg white 36 on red

