

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMMON EIDER MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

*Prepared by: R. Bradford Allen
August 27, 2001*

Problem 1: Additional knowledge of basic life history information (e.g. age at first reproduction, recruitment, duckling survival, migration, non-breeding ecology, population dynamics) is needed to enhance population growth and manage this species in a scientifically sound and sustainable manner.

Strategy 1.1: Actively seek support for sufficient additional staff and financial resources to conduct population management. Reallocating existing staff and financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.

Strategy 1.2: Identify critical eider life history parameters and limiting factors in Maine.

Strategy 1.3: Collaborate with partners in eider research to collect baseline information on population dynamics, recruitment, migration, hunting mortality, contaminants, and develop investigations to understand issues associated with recreational use of eider nesting islands and commercial harvesting of resources in eider feeding and brood-rearing habitats.

Strategy 1.4: Work with partners in the Sea Duck Joint Venture to develop a population model for the southern race of Common Eiders (*Somateria mollissima dresseri*).

Problem 2: Lack of resources and funding to fully implement population and habitat goals and objectives.

Strategy 2.1: Work with partners and actively seek support for sufficient additional financial resources to address priority census and research activities. Reallocating existing financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.

Strategy 2.2: Contribute to efforts to increase conservation ownership of islands that are important to nesting eiders by obtaining additional sources of funding and/or redistributing existing personnel time. Work with partners to secure adequate funds for island acquisition.

Common Eider Problems and Strategies

Strategy 2.3: Work with partners to protect eider nesting habitat through a wide array of habitat protection initiatives including conservation easements and landowner agreements.

Problem 3: Increasing the number of nesting eiders in Maine will require a combination of management techniques including predator control, habitat protection, and expanded information and education efforts.

Strategy 3.1: Secure adequate funding for this program.

Strategy 3.2: Develop public outreach activities to promote an awareness and understanding of Common Eiders (including its habitat requirements, vulnerability to human disturbance, and the need for gull control). This awareness may increase the public's understanding and acceptance of management tools that will be used.

Strategy 3.3: Reduce or eliminate gull populations on certain eider nesting islands to improve nest success, reduce duckling mortality, and improve recruitment of Maine eider ducks.

Strategy 3.4: Develop a harvest management plan that allows for an increase in Maine's eider population.

Strategy 3.5: Continue to cultivate cooperative management relationships with conservation partners and landowners.

Strategy 3.6: Provide critical information for focused conservation programs, such as coastal development planning and oil spill contingency planning.

Strategy 3.7: When necessary, protect eider nesting islands for eiders as Significant Wildlife Habitat – Seabird Nesting Islands (NRPA) or as P-FW or P-RP zones (LURC).

Problem 4: Lack of accurate data on the present status of nesting Common Eider population.

Strategy 4.1: Design censuses and surveys to address this deficiency.

Strategy 4.2: Work with partners to secure adequate funds and resources to monitor Maine's nesting eider population.

Problem 5: Human disturbance on Department-owned and/or Department-managed islands remains a problem to nesting eiders.

Common Eider Problems and Strategies

Strategy 5.1: Produce an appropriate sign explaining to island visitors the critical nesting period and bird's sensitivity to disturbance during that period.

Strategy 5.2: Implement a comprehensive program of posting Department-owned or Department-managed islands with appropriate signs.

Strategy 5.3: Restrict human visitation on eider nesting islands during the nesting season.

Strategy 5.4: Develop, with partners, informational and educational brochures and guides that detail the importance and sensitivity of eiders to human disturbance.