

Northern Gannet

8 Jul 1983

Diamond Lake, Poweshiek Co., IA

\*David Webber

IBL 54:39

Record Number: 83-27  
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

David Webber

REFERENCE

Records Committee: IBL 54:39

VOTE: 2-III, 2-IV, 1-V, 2-VI

IV, Dave called me right after seeing bird. He may well be right too many key character not noted (bill color, size, flight pattern etc) not noted to be positive about the identification.

VI, Koenig reported Caspian Terns there about this time.

V, Details not sufficient to exclude much more likely Caspian Tern.

III, Doc. leaves no other choice.

VI, Tantalizing observation. Yet to an untrained or inexperienced observer a Caspian Tern may appear like a N. Gannet. Mr. Webber did not indicate several things which would support the identification: size estimation (snow goose size?); was there black on the upper surface of the primaries (Caspian has much on lower part); tail shape (diagnostically forked in Caspian; bill color; crested?

III, Rather incredible, but also persuasive; diving eliminates all similar species except terns--Caspian dealt with by observer. Possibly large gull? (none are white with black wing tips except Kittiwake-but bill described as large). Not unexpected on Great Lakes?

IV, Description sounds good. I feel a strong prejudice against believing a gannet was in Iowa, though anything is possible. I want to ask more questions. How familiar is the observer with gulls? Could this be one? Does he realize a Gannet is the size of a Snow Goose, not a Caspian Tern. I could be persuaded to accept this record. This is a case where observer experience must be taken into consideration.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

83-27

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: NORTHERN GANNET

DATE SEEN: July 9, 1983

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Poweshiek County, Iowa

OBSERVERS: David Webber

DATE OF REVIEW: January 1984

METHOD OF REVIEW: Mailed to Records Committee

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: VI

COMMENTS: This was an intriguing record of a bird not<sup>yet</sup> recorded for Iowa, and with few records away from the Atlantic Ocean. The Great Lakes have 12 records, and there are 4 records inland from states bordering the Lakes. Nearest is Indiana, and most records are in late fall. This data, and the feeling that the description did not conclusively eliminate Caspian Tern, led the Records Committee as a group to reject the record. Committee members wanted more information on : bill color, size of bird, flight pattern, any black on upper surface of wings, tail shape, in particular.

There seem to be more records in recent years on the Great Lakes, possibly indicating greater likelihood of its occurrence away from the east coast.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.


Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

What species? Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) How many? One VILocation? Diamond Lake Park (1/2 mile west of Montezuma, Ia.)Type of habitat? Lake, wetlandWhen? date(s): July 9, 1983 time: 12:00 to 13:00 CDTWho? your name and address: David Webber, Box 20 Diamond Lake, Montezuma, Ia. 5017others with you: noneothers before or after you: none

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Large white bird - very large wingspan compared to body length. Definite black wingtips - abruptly stops contrasting to rest of white wing [  ], similar to lesser Snow Goose wing. Had thick, long bill. This bird flew silently at about 40 m above the water and would occasionally dive for fish, hitting the water at a high velocity.

Similar species and how eliminated: Caspian Tern - This tern does not have the black wingtips sharply contrasting to the white wings and is generally smaller in size.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Clear sunny day (viewed at noon to 13:00) Came as close as approx 30 meters. No optical equipment.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Dr. James J. Dinsmore  
Prof. Ornithology, ISU,  
Ames Ia.

How long before field notes made? one hour this form completed? 7 days

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