

## DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Laughing Gull

LOCATION: 125th Street (Port Louisa) Mark Twain NWR (Louisa County)

HABITAT: Shoreline and mudflats of Mississippi River floodwaters

DATE & TIME: 14 June, 2001 (10:56-11:20 AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

OTHERS: Jane Fuller

DESCRIPTION: This was the only gull at this location, and it was standing and walking on the shoreline and mudflat. It was generally gray above and white below. Although this was June, the bird appeared to be in second winter plumage. There were no other gulls to compare size, but it was roughly twice the size of a nearby Killdeer and roughly half the size of a nearby female Mallard.

Specifically, the mantle was a dark gray (darker than I would expect on a Ring-billed). On the standing bird, the wingtips were black with no white spots showing. There was a narrow white area on the greater coverts (trailing edge). The head was white, except for a brownish-gray smudge behind the eye that became wider as it extended back to the nape. The eye was dark, and there was a broken eye ring above and below the eye. The bill was black and relatively long and thin compared to the head size. The underparts were white, except the upper breast was a dirty white. The tail was white, but did have two black areas as remnants of a tail band. The legs were black. At one point, the bird flew a short distance and the underwing appeared gray, with black in the primaries area.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Franklin's Gull would have a generally smaller size and bill, a more extensive partial black hood (not brownish-gray) hood, and white spots on the primaries.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was late morning on a sunny, summer day. I was looking generally north with a window mount KOWA TSN4 telescope (20 x 60 at) distances of 250-300 feet.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen numerous Laughing Gulls, including several in Iowa, but have never studied one in a plumage similar to this.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were dictated and written immediately, and this form was typed on 17 July. I did look at the National Geographic guide at the time of viewing, and later in the evening looked at the Sibley and Grant guides.