

DOCUMENTATION FOR UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

SPECIES: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Adult)

LOCATION: Mississippi River between Moline, Illinois and Bettendorf, Iowa.

DATE: 31 January, 1992 from 2:35-2:45PM, and 1 February, 1992 from 9:50-10:00AM.

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

OTHER OBSERVERS: With me on 1 February were Charles Fuller, and Jane Fuller.

BACKGROUND: I was scoping gulls along the Moline, Illinois waterfront on 31 January, when I found a dark mantled gull with a large group of gulls. I watched it standing on the ice for about ten minutes when a helicopter flew over spooking all the gulls. I watched as it flew around for several minutes, part of the time spent near the Iowa shore. On 1 February, we found a gull in a group in nearly the same location and about the same viewing distance. I did not see anything different about this bird as compared to the one the previous day.

DESCRIPTION: In general size, the bird was between the Herring and Ring-billed gulls. It seemed obviously larger than any Ring-billed, and although appeared to be closer in size to the Herring gulls, it was nevertheless smaller than any of them. It had a dark gray mantle (almost black with the sun on it). The head, neck, underparts, and tail were white, although the head and neck had some brownish streaking typical of a winter adult. The bill was yellow, with a red spot near the end of the lower mandible. At first the bird was lying down on the ice, but as soon as it stood up, yellow legs were seen. In flight, there was a white trailing edge to the upperwing. In addition, the tip of the wing was black, and contrasted with the dark gray of the rest of the wing and back

SIMILAR SPECIES: The only other dark mantled gull with yellow legs is Yellow-footed Gull, which has never been seen outside of the extreme southwestern part of the country. Yellow-footed gull is also larger than the Herring gull, but this bird was smaller in general size.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: On 31 January. the bird was seen in mid afternoon of a clear day looking north with a KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X zoom lens) at about 125 yards. It was also followed in flight with Swift Audubon (8.5 X 44)

binoculars at distances from 100 yards up to a half mile. On 1 February, the bird was seen in mid morning on a cloudless day looking north at about 100 yards.

FIELD NOTES: Field notes were made at the time of observation, and no field guides were consulted until that evening, when the National Geographic and Harrison's Seabirds were consulted. This was typed on 7 February, 1992.