

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Thayer's gull (1st & 2nd - winter) How many? 1Location? NE side Cone Marsh Louisa Co IAType of habitat? freshwater marsh with considerable open waterWhen? date(s): Feb 27 1983 time: 11:10 AM to 12:30 PMWho? your name and address: M. Newton 408 Wales St. Iowa City IA 52240others with you: C.S. Newton

others before or after you: _____

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.

Size: v. slightly smaller than adjacent Herring gull; rather larger than ^{adjacent} ring-billed gull. proportions: less massive head and noticeably smaller bill than Herring gull; body more slender; wingtips extended beyond tail 1/2-2X farther than in Herring gull ^{color} bill pale at base, gradually blending to dark distal 1/3. legs dark, ^{not obs} well.

head + underparts v. pale whitish grey. ^{at rest} mantle + coverts with same base color, mottled with a darker but still rather pale brownish-grey. ~~coverts mottled with brownish-grey~~ primaries same color as dark mottlings on coverts. In flight, at distance, whole upper surface of wing appeared a ^{pale brownish-grey} uniform ~~greyish-brown~~ - no contrast between primaries, secondaries, and coverts. From below, with light behind bird, primaries and secondaries appeared uniformly + translucently pale, with no dark markings; ^{under-wing} coverts darker pale grey. Tail pale, uniform, no dark band at tip.

at distance, through binoculars, bird appeared remarkably uniform - a pale brownish-grey all over; ~~no dark markings~~ much less contrast between mantle/coverts + head/body and ^{between} base color + mottlings on mantle, compared to 1st-winter + 2nd-winter Herring gulls obs in the same flock.

^{rimming + end of wing.}
~~no dark markings~~

Similar species and how eliminated: proportions, uniformly pale primaries would rule out Herring; size/build rules out imm. Glaucous. Bill much less heavy than imm. Glaucous-winged. Remaining question is whether this bird is ^(open)

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: 100yds - 200yds; light at ~90° angle, not optimal. high hazy cloud - no shadows.

8x40 binocs, 25x40 scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: have seen Thayer's in Cal (C) + WA (CO). also Glaucous-winged; Iceland, Glaucous, Kaurlien's (MA); many Herring, ring-billed.

References and persons consulted before writing description: _____

How long before field notes made? immediately after this form completed? later same day.

a Thayer's gull or a Kumlien's gull, presently considered separate species but widely suspected of being conspecific. Thayer's is extremely variable, and the limits of its variability are not well known, especially for imm. plumage. [Dwight says of his series of ad. thayeri, 'no two are alike'. It seems probable that there is clinal variation from west to east (thayeri - kumlieni - nominate glaucoides) and even possible that thayeri interbreeds with argentatus at the western end of its range.] In addition several plumage descriptions in the literature may be assigned to birds of mixed age. Be that as it may:

L. glaucoides glaucoides is supposed to have pale warm-brown primaries as a 1-U, pale, nearly whitish ones as a 2-U (though photos in Grant's book show one 2-U with pale-brown primaries, concolor with coverts).

L. glaucoides kumlieni (in Dwight's plates) is assigned v. pale primaries as a 1-U, with slightly darker outer webs; would look uniform pale grey at any distance. His 2-U has darker primaries, a pair with slightly darker outer webs [I suspect these assignments should be reversed.]

L. thayeri in published descriptions is supposed to have darker primaries still, though not so dark as those of imm. Herring gulls, and lacking contrast with mantle. However some west coast thayeri-type gulls are very pale - though their back color is grey-brown rather than the warmer pale tan of L. glaucoides. (It is possible that these are really kumlieni but little data exists.)

It is the similarity of the Core mark Bird to one I photographed in Cal. that convinced me to classify it as thayeri - though kumlieni cannot be unequivocally ruled out.