

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Franklin's Gull

Number: 1 ad. in breeding plumage

Date: 1 Feb 1991

Time: 4:10-5:20 p.m.

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-at spillway below dam

Observer(s): Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA

Other observer(s): none

Description of bird(s): I arrived below the spillway at about 4 p.m. and quickly looked over the hundred or so ducks that were present. After several minutes I noticed a lone gull flying upriver towards me. In early February, any gull is unusual at this location. But I was quite surprised to note the solid black head, dull red legs, dark gray mantle, black wingtips separated from the rest of the wing by a narrow white bar, the rounded appearance of the wings, and the small size that identified the bird as an adult breeding-plumaged Franklin's Gull. Additional features noted on the bird when it landed on the water included a short, dull red bill with no pronounced gonys and broad white eye crescents (separated in front of and behind each eye). The underparts and tail were white. The mantle was dark gray, noticeably darker than the mantle of a Ring-billed or Herring Gull, though not black like the mantle of a Great Black-backed Gull. Based on the completely black head, eye crescents, and reddish bill and legs I concluded that the bird was a nuptial-plumaged Franklin's Gull. This is the third year in a row that a nuptial-plumaged Franklin's Gull has been present at Saylorville Reservoir in Jan-Feb.

Similar species and how eliminated: The dark gray wings separated from the black wingtip by a white bar, broad white eye crescents, stocky bill lacking a pronounced gonys and rounder wings eliminate Laughing Gull. The combination of the black head and dark gray mantle eliminates other dark-headed gulls such as Bonaparte's and Common Black-headed gulls.

Optical equipment and viewing conditions: Viewing conditions were excellent with sun to one side. Estimated viewing distance as close as 50 feet on several occasions. I used Bausch and Lomb 7x35 binoculars.

References consulted: none

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with both Franklin's
and Laughing Gulls from Iowa and Florida.

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? 4 hours