

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF OMAHA

(A Chapter of the National Audubon Society)

2nd State Record



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species: Great Black-backed Gull
2. Number: 1
3. Location: Lake Manawa, Council Bluffs, Iowa
4. Date: December 6, 1978
5. Time Bird Seen: Approx. 4:30 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern:

See also Korndes

I was viewing a glaucous gull, which had been sighted and reported by Dr. R. G. Cortelyou of Omaha, Neb., when a gull that was the same size as the glaucous landed on the edge of the ice about 5 feet away. I immediately noticed the striking contrast between the light head coloring which extended down into the breast to its darker back. The overall confirmation of this bird was what I would describe as rather chunky. The next thing I observed was the heavy and large bill, which was totally black with a down curve on the end, much different from a Herring both in size and shape. The mantle was a brownish and lighter color than the blackish primary and secondary wing feathers. This bird had a white rump patch with a dark band on the tail edged in white. Its feet were flesh colored. It matched in every detail the 1st winter stage of plumage of the Great black-backed gull.

7. Description of voice, if heard: Did not hear it.
8. Description of behavior. I watched the bird just standing for about 15 minutes, then it flew a few yards away and I was struck by the very long wingspan and the powerful downward stroke of its wings. The flight was very comparable to the glaucous. It would fly up and come back at almost the same spot.
9. Habitat-general, specific. Most of Lake Manawa was frozen over at this time but there were small patches of open water. The bird was standing on the ice at the edge of one of these patches.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6,7,8.
There were only two gulls at this time there--this bird and the glaucous.
11. Distance (how measured) I can only estimate that it was between 300 and 400 feet from my viewing point on the shore.
12. Optical equipment. I could see the bird very well through Bushnell 7 x 35 Wide-angle binoculars but I studied this bird carefully through a Baush & Lomb Spotting Scope on 30 power. It could be seen almost equally as well on both 15 and 20 power hoever.
13. Light: I was facing east as I was studying the bird, the afternoon sun was to my back which provided very good lighting conditions.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: I have been a very avid birder for about 12 years and am very familiar with the regular migratory species of this area.

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15. Other Observers: James and Sandy Kovanda were with me and saw the bird.
16. Did the others agree with your identification; Yes.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: I was the first person to identify the gull but others readily agreed with me.
18. Books. Birds of North America (field guide) and Peterson's field guide to birds of eastern North America.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description.
I wrote notes in less than an hour and made notations on my field guide.

Signature

Ruth C. Moore

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Date: January 6, 1979