

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Sabine's Gull; **Number:** 1 juvenile

Location: Babcock Access, Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., IA

Date: 18 Aug 1999; **Time:** 4:30 to 5:45 p.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: Jim Fuller with me; James Huntington arrived after we got best views of the bird.

Habitat and circumstances: upper part of reservoir with shallow pools and mud flats.

Description of bird: While scanning with my telescope, I saw two gulls flying, one a Ring-billed Gull and the other a much smaller gull with a prominent W pattern on the upper wings. The outer, anterior triangle of the upper wing was black, the inner, anterior triangle was brown from the angle of the wing to the posterior base and light-colored in front of that, and the posterior triangle was white. The nape and posterior crown were also brown, and there was a smudge behind the eye. The tip of the white tail had a thin black band. I could not determine the shape of the tip of the tail. We watched the bird after it landed on a distant spit. It was about 2/3 as long and as tall as Ring-billed Gulls. The wings, back, and posterior head and neck were brown and the primaries black. After a long time, the bird flew away from us and was not seen again.

Voice: not heard.

Similar species: Immature Black-legged Kittiwake and Little Gull may present a W pattern, but not a dark back. The lighter color of the interior triangle on the upper wing was the only field mark that did not seem to fit.

Any one have reservations?: Jim agreed. I don't know whether James saw the bird well enough to call.

Light: Cloudy, looking east; **Distance:** about 1/4 mile; **Optics:** 20x scope.

Previous experience: I have seen several in Iowa and elsewhere.

References before/after viewing: We looked at National Geographic Guide.

Time of notes: 2 hours; **Final typing:** 2 days.