

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull

Number: 1 fourth-basic

Location: Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA (below dam)

Habitat: river below dam

Date: 26, 30 December 1997

Time: 2:05-4:55 p.m. (26 December) and 1:40-4:05 p.m. (30 December)

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 ½ West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): James J. Dinsmore, Kay Niyo, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): On 26 December, Jim Dinsmore and I arrived below the dam and Jim soon spotted a dark-mantled gull feeding in the spillway. We watched the bird in flight for 15 minutes and concluded it was a Lesser Black-backed Gull. We noted the very dark gray mantle, black primaries with very little white (one large white mirror on p10 and white at the tips of remaining primaries), white tail, yellow legs, medium size (larger than Ring-billed Gull and smaller than Herring Gull), and heavily streaked head and upper breast. We later observed the bird resting on the sandbar below the spillway. We confirmed the marks noted above. The bill was structurally similar to the bill of a Herring Gull. The bill was black with the distal one-third to one half of the bill yellow. In all other respects, the bird resembled an adult bird. We concluded that the bird was in fourth-basic plumage. These features are consistent with the conclusions of Grant (1986).

On 30 December, Kay Niyo and I observed this same individual at this location. We again noted the bill pattern and all other features described above.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, dark gray mantle, yellow legs and bill pattern eliminates other gulls, especially Great Black-backed, California, and Slaty-backed.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was <100m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have extensive experience with Lesser Black-backed Gulls from North Carolina, where I have seen >100 individuals. I also have limited experience with this species from Iowa and Nebraska.

References consulted: Grant, P. J. 1986. Gulls: A guide to identification. Buteo Books, Vermillion, SD.

How long before field notes made: none written

How long before this form completed: written 6 January 1998