

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**  
**December 19, 1993**  
**Coralville Reservoir, Johnson County, Iowa**

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During the Iowa City Christmas Count, our party located a large group of gulls loafing and feeding in the upper reaches of the Coralville Reservoir. Of about 500 gulls total, nearly 90% were adult Ring-Billed Gulls and the rest were mostly winter adult and a few subadult Herring Gulls. We were in cars about 150 yards from the gulls. The sky was totally overcast but viewing conditions were reasonable. The total observation time was about 45 minutes during two sessions. I used 10X40 binoculars and a 22X spotting scope.

During the first scan of the sitting gulls, we easily picked out one bird with a dramatically darker mantel. I looked at the bird through the scope while Lanny Haldy noted my remarks upon which the following description is based:

*An adult gull in between the size of adjacent Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. It was noticeable larger than the Ring-bills; not too much smaller than the Herrings. It differed from the Herrings in being a little less barrel chested and a little slimmer, more horizontal in posture.*

*The solidly dark mantel was dark slaty-gray (easily picked out of the group with the unaided eye). The sitting bird had white spots in the wing tips. The underparts were completely white. The head was lightly streaked with gray brown; the forehead just above the bill was white; top of the head more streaked and most dark around the eye. The streaking continued down the back of the head.*

*The bill appeared to be heavy throughout it's length (compared to a Ring-Bill) with a heavy hook at the end. It was very reddish on the distal half and seemed lighter colored at the base.*

*The bird was standing in water that came almost to the belly so seeing the color of the legs was extremely difficult. The few times I got a glimpse of the leg when it walked or preened, I couldn't really tell the color. However, I also couldn't definitively determine the color on many of the other nearby gulls either. The light was just too gray.*

Other observers were Lanny Haldy, Randy Graesser, Dan Ray, Angela Ray, and Kathleen Kuenstling.

We briefly looked at the National Geographic field guide during and after the observation. This may have been the same bird seen 9 days earlier at the Coralville Dam by Randy Pinkston. This bird was seen later on the 19th by Tom Kent, Jim Fuller, and others.

I have seen Lesser Black-backed Gulls before, both winter adults, at Red Rock Reservoir in 1984 and in Iowa City several years ago.

These notes were made during the observation and the form typed the next day.