

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Black-legged Kittiwake (first winter)

Location: Jester Park, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: Open water

Date: November 10, 1990

Time: 10:10 am to 10:30 am

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Bery Engebretsen, Gene and Eloise Armstrong, Pam and Reid Allen, other members of Des Moines Audubon

Description of bird: On this particular morning there were a number of gulls either on the water or in the air near the Jester Park boat ramp. While looking over the gulls on the water, primarily Bonaparte's, one gull was distinctly different from the others. The first notable characteristic, other than its size, was that it showed a dark wing stripe that contrasted with the rest of the wing. It was larger than the Bonaparte's and closer to the size of a Ring-billed. The bird often tucked its smallish black bill under its wing, but noticeable were the white forehead, dark eye, black crescent on light gray behind the eye, black collar on the nape, white breast and belly, pearly gray mantle and scapulars, black tip on white tail and black outer primaries, black upper wing coverts creating a black line through the wing, and white secondaries. I periodically saw the bird in the air later in the morning, at which time the black "M" marking on the wings was very noticeable. I never did get a good look at the tail in flight.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Although a number of first year gulls show some type of dark "M", none of the expected, or even unexpected, species have the combination of the wing pattern and neck collar that this bird had. Bonaparte's, Ross', Com. Black-headed, Little and Sabine's gulls could all be eliminated by the presence of the collar. Red-legged Kittiwake, the one gull to share the neck collar, was eliminated by the black carpal bar and black tips to tail feathers.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): The sky was overcast but reasonably bright. Initial observation was through a scope at approximately 25x-45x at an estimated 100 yards. The bird was also seen periodically at further distances.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: This is the third straight fall I have observed an immature Black-legged Kittiwake in Iowa.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America and Harrison's Seabirds were both consulted prior to completing documentation

How long before field notes made? Notes dictated during observation How long before this form completed? Completed following day