

DOCUMENTATION FORM

CBC

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Franklin's Gull - 1 adult in alternate plumage
December 16, 1990 1:00 to 1:30 p.m.
Coralville Reservoir, Johnson County

During the Iowa City Christmas Count, Carol Thompson reported seeing a gull with a black head in the area of the Jolly Roger recreation area on the Coralville Reservoir. Despite having spent several hours here earlier in the day scanning the many gulls and ducks, I had missed this bird. After returning, I relocated the bird standing on the edge of ice about 600 yards (estimated) away. The sky was overcast and the viewing conditions were of medium quality. The bird was immediately adjacent to a group of about 20 Ring-billed and several Herring Gulls. Overall, there were about 400 gulls present. With a 22X scope, I noted the following features which I wrote down immediately after viewing the bird (retyped below the next day along with the rest of this form):

"-Bird standing with group of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls
-approximately 2/3 size of Ring-bill
-legs had reddish cast - not good light
-mantle solid uniform grey, clearly darker than Ring-bill
-full black hood - distinct white eye crescents both above and below
-white tertial mark (on sitting bird) about 2/3 way down the back
-white area between mantel and wingtips which were black with white tips."

While observing the bird, I checked the NGS guide. Based on that and on the observation, I considered several similar species and eliminated them as below:

Laughing Gull: White in wingtips of adult gull doesn't fit.
Bonaparte's Gull: Mantel color seemed too dark for adult bird and white tertial mark on mantel indicates a white trailing edge to wing which doesn't fit.
Common Black-headed Gull: same problems as with Bonaparte's.

After about 15 minutes, Tom Kent arrived and apparently agreed with this identification. Other birders present and agreeing included Randy Graesser, John Van Ryebroek, and Dick Tetrault.