

Unusual Observation Documentation

Black-legged Kittiwake, Rissa tridactyla

one, immature

Bill and eye black, bill thin and straight; underparts white; head mostly white, with black spots behind eyes, spots somewhat connected by a diffuse pale grey band; a black bar at the base of the neck from the sides of the breast around the back of the neck; back light grey; tail white with a black terminal bar; wings long and narrow, pointed, with a thin black triangle from the wrist out to the outer primaries, a broad white triangle from the wrist to the inner primaries and outer secondaries, a black bar from the wrist diagonally across the forewing to the tips of the inner secondaries, the inner forewing anterior to this bar light grey, as the mantle; underwings white, with some dark markings near the wingtips; feet not seen; in flight and on the water, this gull was larger than adjacent Bonaparte's Gulls, and similar in size to Ring-billed Gulls.

No vocalizations were heard.

This bird was first seen while flying over the open water of the lake, and was seen to land on the water, rest there for several minutes at a time, and resume flying over wide areas of the western half of the lake; the bird was active, flying often, until the last half hour before sunset, when it joined a gathering flock of Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls roosting on the open water away from shore.

Immature Bonaparte's, Common Black-headed, and Little Gull lack the white triangle in the wing in the primaries and secondaries. Immature Red-legged Kittiwake and Sabine's Gull lack the bar across the inner wing of this bird. All these species except the kittiwakes lack the dark bar across the back of the neck, Red-legged Kittiwake lacks the tail band, and Bonaparte's, Little, and Sabine's Gulls are smaller than this bird appeared by comparison to Ring-billed Gulls.

I have seen a few Black-legged Kittiwakes on the Massachusetts coast, but all have been adults. I have seen many Bonaparte's Gulls in various plumages.

This bird was seen at Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, on October 24, 1988, from 5 pm til sunset, approximately 6:30 pm. During most of the observations, the bird was east of me, the sun behind me to the west, giving good lighting conditions. Optics used included a 22 x 60 spotting scope and 10 x 50 binoculars. Distance to the bird varied from about 100 to several hundred feet. Other observers included Betty Grenon, Loren and Babs Padelford, and Jim and Sandra Kovanda. I am aware of no photographs. Field guides used included the National Geographic Society's to birds of North America, Robbin's, et al., to birds of North America, & Peterson's to the eastern U. S.

This report was prepared from notes made [redacted] during the observation period noted above. Identification was made with the bird in view.

Today's date is October 27, 1988.

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