

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

Species: Greater Black-backed Gull (Adult) Number: 4

Location: Mississippi River between lock 15 & 14

Observer: Ray Cummins 609 s. Main st. Centerville, IA. 52544

Others before/with/after: Pete Petersen & Tim Shantz

Date: 2-08-92 Time Bird Seen: 10:00am to 10:15am

Habitant & circumstances: I saw a total of four adult Greater Black-backed gulls between lock 15 & 14. Two were seen briefly and in rather poor light setting with Herring Gulls above lock 15. This was around 9AM and they flew off to the north. The fourth was just above the e. Moline bridge on the Iowa side at 12AM. The third was seen across the river from Campbells Island around 10AM. This bird I saw standing, spreading it's wings, and flying. It is the bird described below.

Description: A large, bulky, white-headed, black-backed gull was my intial impression. Compared to the many Herring Gulls present it was 15+% larger. Head white with limited nape streaking. The bill was large and yellow, but distance precluded more detail. The legs were pale gray-pinkish colored. I got an excellent view of it's upper wing pattern as it balanced while eating a dead fish. The inner wing, secondary and mantle were slightly blacker than the primaries. The trailing edge was white from the outer primaries to the base of the mantle. The outer two primaries terminated with an elongated white area giving the outer primaries the appearance of having a white corner. The under wing was never clearly seen, but the wings did appear long in comparison to the Herring Gulls.

Description of voice, if heard: N/H

Similarly appearing species: The very large size eliminates the others possible Black-backed Gulls.

Distance (how measured): 500yds estimated on a river width of 950yds.
Optical equipment: 20X x 60X Kowa spotting scope.

Light: Sun at back excellent light

Previous experience with species: Seen many on the east coast

Any one have reservations?: No.

Books and references: National Geographic during observation.

Time of field notes: during observation. Final typing: 7 days.

Signature: _____ Address: 609 S. Main St.

Date: 02-15-92 _____ Centerville, Ia. 52544