

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Sabine's Gull

Number: 1 juvenile

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: large lake

Date: 25 October 1998

Time: 7:28-8:55 a.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 1/2 West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): Bery Engebretsen

Description of bird(s): I was scanning the lake from the dam when I noticed a lone gull near the marina entrance, a distance of at least two miles from the dam. The unusual, tern-like flight initially caught my eye. Despite the great distance, I was able to see the diagnostic wing pattern with my scope on high power. I then watched the bird as it worked its way along the west shore of the lake towards the dam and eventually landed in a large flock of Franklin's Gulls. The bird was slightly smaller than a Franklin's Gull. The bill was short and black. The underparts were white. The forehead was white. The crown, nape, mantle, and visible portion of the folded wing were a dull brown color. In flight, the wing pattern was distinctive; black outer primaries and their coverts, brown secondary coverts and inner secondaries, and white on the remainder of the upperwing. The general appearance of the upperwing was of three triangles of color. The underwing was white. The tail was white with a narrow black terminal band and was slightly forked. Leg color was not seen. On the basis of these features, I aged the bird as a juvenile.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of small size, forked tail, and upperwing pattern eliminates other small gulls, especially Little Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake in first-basic plumage.

Previous experience with species: I have seen at least six other Sabine's Gulls in Iowa. I have also seen many in Nebraska and Colorado, including at least 17 in those two states in fall 1998.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun behind me. Estimated viewing distance was mostly >1 mile, but the bird was eventually within 400m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 26 October 1998