

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Great Black-backed Gull

Number: 1 adult basic

Location: below Lock and Dam 14, Davenport, Scott Co., IA

Habitat: resting on large river

Date: 2 January 1996

Time: 3:50-4:30 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: Jim Dinsmore, Kelly McKay

Description of bird(s): We were scanning the large gull flock from Butterworth Park in Moline, IL when I spotted a larger, dark-mantled gull that I immediately recognized as an adult Great Black-backed Gull. The bird spent most of its time resting on the water with Herring Gulls. Compared to a Herring Gull, this bird was about 25% larger. The mantle and upperwings were coal black with large white mirrors on the outer two primaries and a narrow white trailing edge to the wing. The white scapular crescent was prominent while the bird was on the water. Compared to Herring, this bird was very white-headed: in fact, I saw no brown streaking on the head. The bill was long and thick with a bulbous tip and a red spot near the tip of the lower mandible. Leg color and underwing pattern were not noted, mainly because of the low light conditions. The bird spent much of its time resting on what appeared to be the Illinois side of the river, but on at least one occasion the gulls were flushed by an eagle and landed briefly on the Iowa side.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of large size, coal black mantle and upperwings, and massive bill eliminates all other larids.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were fair with overcast skies and strong winds. Estimated viewing distance was 200-300m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with this species from work along the East Coast.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: none written

How long before this form completed: 26 February 1996