

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Great Black-backed Gull How many? 1 - (1st winter)Location? above Lock and Dam #15 - Davenport - (Scott Co.)Type of habitat? on ice in Mississippi River with other gullsWhen? date(s): Feb. 6, 1999 time: 4:00 p.m. to 4:48 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Reported by others on Birdline before we saw it

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

We saw this huge dark gull on the ice with many other gulls. It was noticeably dark-colored. It had light-colored head and neck but it was not a real bright white. It had very dark brown wings. It had a huge dark black bill that was much more massive than 1st year Herring Gull bills. It was larger than Herring Gulls beside it - both 1st year immatures and adults. It was preening all the time. It had light pink legs and feet. It had a dark eye. It was a massive, bulky gull with a bigger body than Herring Gulls by it. The tail was very hard to see with all the preening action. I could see it had dark terminal edge of its tail and it appeared to have checkered white and dark markings on the side of its tail up from the dark terminal band. It took off and flew out over the river and headed upriver. I didn't really see too much as it flew - a dark gull.

Similar species and how eliminated:

A 1st winter Lesser Black-backed Gull is much smaller - about the size of a Ring-billed Gull. This is a really big gull - bigger than other possibilities.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain: :

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Cloudy, good viewing. Distance - 40 yards estimated.8X30 Binocs and 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen in Maine in summer. Have seen lots of 1st year Herring Gulls.References and persons consulted before writing description: None really. Looked at National Geographic guide and Seabirds and Robbins' guide while viewing.How long before field notes made? 11:00 a.m. this form completed? Feb. 24, 1999Feb. 7, 1999

Also,
much
different
from
1st winter
Herring
Gulls.