

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Adult)

LOCATION: Mississippi River above Lock & Dam #15 (Scott County)

DATE & TIME: 5 February, 1995 (8:30-9:00AM) and 12 February, 1995 (11:40-11:55 AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHERS: Jim Scheib was with me during second sighting. Others seeing the bird were Kent, Dorrance, Barker, Petersen, E & E Armstrong.

DESCRIPTION: On both occasions, this bird was standing with Herring Gulls on ice in the middle of the Mississippi River. During the second sighting it spent most of the time lying on the ice and sleeping. The bird was easy to pick out from the Herring Gulls as it had a dark gray mantle and wings. It was also noticeably smaller than any Herring Gull. The underparts were white and the head and neck were white with winter plumage streaking. The bill was yellow, with a red spot toward the end of the lower mandible. The eye was dark. The legs were yellow, in fact they were a brilliant golden-yellow when the early morning sun was shining on the bird during the first sighting.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The only other dark mantled gull with yellow legs is the Yellow-footed Gull. That bird has never been seen away from the extreme southwest portion of the country, and it should be much larger.

VIEWING CONDITIONS & OPTICS: The first sighting was looking toward north, with sun shining from the southeast. A KOWA TSN4 telescope (20-60X zoom lens) was used at a distance of about 250-300 yards. The second sighting was more at midday and was looking from Iowa shore northeast on a sunny day with the same window mount optics.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have previously seen seven different adult birds of this species and one second year bird, all in Iowa.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: No field guides were noted, and field notes were made in car after viewing. This form was typed on 21 February, 1995.