

Franklin's Gull
16 Jan 1987
Lock and Dam 19, Lee Co., IA
*Vernon Kleen, *R. Cecil
also 17 Jan; IBL 57:55, 58:74

Record Number: 87-01
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Vernon Kleen, 16 Jan
Robert Cecil, 17 Jan

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:55
Records Committee: IBL 58:74

VOTE: 1-II, 6-III

III, One documentation was written 10 days later and this makes it difficult to evaluate. Cecil took field notes, so I concentrated on his documentation only. A "breeding" plumage Franklin's Gull in mid-January is surprising but not impossible. Grant says that "unlike any other gull, Franklin's has a complete molt in both spring and autumn." He goes on to say that all moults after the post-juvenile one are "always complete, in autumn prior to the southward migration (from July to October) to winter plumage, and in 'spring' prior to the northward migration (from November to April) to summer plumage." Thus, this bird was probably a northward migrant and could have begun its moult to summer plumage in November. The description itself seems conclusive and rules out any of the rarer gulls.

III, Excellent descriptions written 3 and 10 days after sighting.

III, Very good study and documentations. They describe adult breeding plumage Franklin's Gull very well. A highly unusual time of year for this species to be in Iowa.

III, Good description for this bird at a very unusual date.

III, convincing description by both documentors.

III, I don't like the time delay before the descriptions were written, but it's a distinctive species. What really bothers me, though, is how a Franklin's Gull in apparent fresh breeding plumage was in Keokuk in January.

1. Species: Franklin's Gull Number seen: 1
 (If known) Age: adult Sex: ? Plumage: adult
2. Location (including county): Hamilton (Hancock Co), Ill. & Keokuk, Iowa
3. Date(s): 16 Jan. 1987 Time of day: 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.
4. Observers -- Your name: Vernon Kleen Phone: (217) 636-8476
 Address: RR #2, Box 481 Athens, IL Zip 62613
 Others present: Kathy Andrews, Mary Grapperhaus, et. al.
 Others ~~before~~ or after you: Bob Cecil, Joel Greenberg, ??

5. Describe the habitat the bird(s) was found in and the surrounding habitat:

The bird was flying over & around the pool of the Mississippi River just below the lock and dams at Keokuk. The water was open.

6. Description: Describe in great detail (but only include what actually was seen in the field (the size, shape and color pattern of the bird(s)). Include a description of the bill, eye, legs, feet, tail, body and wings as well as other diagnostic characteristics.

Distinctive and complete black head; white eye ring incomplete as large as king-billed gulls in association. Darker mantle than king-bills; white tail; white trailing edge of secondaries (about 1/2" wide); windows of white in outer 3-4 primaries and white trailing edge of primaries as well. Black wing tips between white tip & windows. Reddish cast to bill. Feet not observed well.

The presence of this bird was announced to many observers from Illinois and Iowa attending the Bald Eagle Appreciation Days program and seen by many.

This documentation prepared from visual memory of bird (up consultation of book) at request of Bob Cecil for Iowa records.

Species: Franklin's Gull Date seen: 16 Jun 87 Observer: Vern Kleen

7. Similar species (explain how eliminated): White-rumped in wing eliminated
Saunder's; lack of extensive white in wing eliminated Bonaparte's
and Black-headed or Sabine's.

8. Describe the bird's behavior: Only observed flying out over the Mississippi
river;

9. Describe the song or call notes heard:

10. Viewing conditions:

Optical equipment used (type, power): Lutz 10x40

Closest distance to bird (how measured): 20 yards (estimated)

Lighting and weather: cloudy all day

Was the bird photographed? yes By whom? Fre-lance Iowa photographer Attached? No

11. Summarize previous experience with this species and similar species:

Much experience with Franklin's, Saunder's & Bonaparte's Gulls; only
one previous observation of Black-headed Gull.

12. Other observers who did not agree with the identification (explain): None

13. List books and illustrations consulted and advice received. How did these influence this description?

I know bird before book consulted.
Robbins - Birds of North America.

14. How long after observing the bird(s) before field notes completed? 10 days

15. How long after observing the bird(s) before this form completed? 10 days

Mail this completed form to: Avian Ecology Program, Natural Heritage Division
Dept. of Conservation, Springfield, IL 62701

If you have observed a common bird species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season or at an unusual location, and you wish to share this experience with the scientific community, special documentation is necessary.

An acceptable documentation consists of one or more of the following: a collected, diagnostic specimen; a diagnostic photograph; a diagnostic recording of the bird's voice; or, an accurate and detailed written description of the observation. It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What Species? Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) How many? 1 ad.

Location? Lock and Dam 19, Keokuk, Lee Co, Iowa.

Type of Habitat? River rapids

When? date(s)? Jan. 17, 1987 time: 12:30 PM to 12:45 PM

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

others with you: Doug Reeves (Iowa D.N.R.).

others before or after you: Vernon Kleen (Ill. Cons. Comm.) and others reported by Kleen.

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Doug Reeves noted that Vernon Kleen had seen a Franklin's Gull earlier in the morning. After a few minutes of watching gulls, he spotted it over the river. I noted a smaller gull with the following features: Complete and conspicuous black hood, conspicuous broken white eye ring, deep red bill that was otherwise unmarked. The mantle of the bird (except for the wingtips) was a uniform darker gray--noticeably darker than the accompanying Herring and Ringbill adults. The wingtips were black, but were separated from the dark gray of the mantle by a thin but obvious white line. Overall, the size of the bird was smaller than accompanying Ringbills.

I also noted a very pale and indistinct pink blush on the bird's breast. I was not looking for this field mark--I think I had pretty much forgotten about this characteristic. It was only recalled to me when I saw it. Otherwise, the underparts, tail, and neck to hood were uniform white.

Similar species and how eliminated: Laughing--No white in wing between mantle and black tip. Bonaparte's: No white on wing's leading edge. C. Black-headed: wingtip pattern like Bonaparte's. Little Gull has gray, not black wingtips.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Generally sunny. Distance about 100 ft. minimum (guess)

Optics: 10x40 Zeiss Binocs. Scope 20x Nikon.

Previous experience with this and similar species:

Have seen a few Franklins, Bonapartes in breeding plumage. Not seen C. Black Headed, References and persons consulted before writing description: Little.

N.G.S. Field Guide reviewed carefully during sighting

How long before field notes made?

Not made

How long before this form completed?

3 days, with a few later additions