

Laughing Gull
21 Jul 1992
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA
*Kent, *Johnson, *J. Fuller, *P. Allen
IBL 62:108, 63:69, P-0341

Record Number: 92-30
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent, 21 July, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246
Ann Johnson, 22 July, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211
Jim Fuller, 23 July, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA 52240
Pam Allen, 26 July, 1601 Pleasant St., W Des Moines, IA 50265

PHOTOGRAPHS

Tim Schantz, 28 July, P-0341 (6/30/93)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:108
Records Committee: IBL 63:69

VOTE: 6 A-P, 1 failed to vote

A-P, Photo shows no hood, complete tail band, more black/brown in wings than Franklin's, brown on head and neck, dusky brown under the wings and a long black bill; all diagnostic for Laughing Gull.

A-P, Good photos and documentations for a juvenile Laughing Gull.



Laughing Gull P-0341
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
28 Jul 1992 Tim Schantz 92-30

92-30

Laughing Gull P-0341
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
28 Jul 1992 Tim Schantz 92-30

92-30

F-510P 06429 INN28

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Laughing Gull; *Number:* 1 juvenile

Location: Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

Date: 21 July 1992; *Time:* 7:45 to 8:00 a.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: Tim Schantz

Habitat and circumstances: spillway and river below dam

Description of bird: The bird was flying the entire time. It appeared smaller than the many Ring-billed Gulls present. It was easily picked out by its size and brown coloration. The outer part of the upper wing (from the elbow) was black; the inner part was light brown except for a black secondary bar and thin white trailing edge. The under wing was also black at the tip and brown proximally, except for a large oval black patch near the body. The upper tail was white at the base with a black band occupying the distal one-third; there was a thin white terminal band. The under tail was white proximally and dark distally. The back, nape, and upper head were light brown. A brown wash extended around to the breast giving a poorly demarcated breast band that was narrow in front. The bill was thin and black. The eye was dark. Movement was too fast for me to detect eye crescents. The legs were dark. The bird flew back and forth and occasionally picked food off of the water surface. Photos taken.

Voice: Not heard.

Similar species: The bird was smaller and more brown than the ring-bills of the year. The other features noted above make the juvenile Laughing Gull an easy identification.

Any one have reservations?: No.

Light: Looking into the sun or sideways from the south tailgate area. *Distance:* 20 to 100 yards (filled 1/3 of 400mm lens image); *Optics:* 10x binocular, 400 mm lens.

Previous experience: Have seen and photographed many.

References before/after viewing: none.

Time of notes: immediately after viewing; *Final typing:* 10 hours.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Laughing Gull - juvenile

Location: Red Rock Dam, Marion Co., Iowa

Habitat: Open river below dam

Date: 22 July 1992

Time: 18:00 to 18:30

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: None at the time, Dave Arbor and Tim Schantz prior, mob subsequent

Description of bird: This gull was flying below the dam with several Ring-billed Gulls. The small head and long (nearly the length of the head), thin, gently curved dark bill identified it as one of the hooded gulls. The bird was considerably slimmer and more buoyant than the Ring-bills. Overall coloration from above was gray-brown. The head was dusky with white on the cheeks, chin, and upper throat. There was also a small white spot directly above the culmen. The eye was black with a white, broken half crescent behind it. The mantle and wing coverts were gray-brown with white edgings creating a scalloped look. The primaries were black. A black, narrow secondary bar was edged in white. The rump and rounded tail were white with a complete, wide black tail band narrowly edged in white. From below the bird showed a dusky breast and flanks with the rest of the underparts white. The undertail was white with sooty gray wide corners forming an incomplete tail band. The underwings were dusky with the exception of dark primaries and dark axillary patches similar to those on a Prairie Falcon. A white trailing edge to the underwing was evident. The legs looked black when the bird was in flight, but when sitting they looked grayer. The bird spent most of the half hour feeding and circling the river, but did sit briefly on a concrete structure.

Similar species and how eliminated: Size and structure, combined with bill shape, eliminated the "Herring complex" gulls and identified this bird as one of the hooded gulls. Although it was easily picked out of the group of Ring-billed Gulls by virtue of its size, the overall length approached that of a Ring-billed. This size in combination with the lack of any carpal bar and the overall gray-brown appearance eliminated other hooded gulls. The closest other candidate, Franklin's Gull, can be eliminated by color, lack of any semblance of a hood, and the complete tail band on the dorsal side.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Sky was overcast. Bird was observed at various distances, the closest being about 25 feet. Optics included 7x26 binoculars and scope at 30X on sitting bird.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: This is the third juvenile Laughing Gull I have observed in the Red Rock area. Others have been seen in coastal areas.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Description dictated without references; Harrison's Seabirds consulted prior to writing documentation

How long before field notes made? Description dictated during observation

How long before this form completed? Same night

Species: Laughing Gull - juvenile

Location: Red Rock Dam, Marion Co., Iowa

Habitat: Open river below dam

Date: 22 July 1992
Time: 18:00 to 18:30

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 130th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: None at the time, Dave Arbor and Tim Schmitt prior, web subsequent

Description of bird: This gull was flying below the dam with several Ring-billed Gulls. The small head and long (nearly the length of the head), thin, gently curved dark bill identified it as one of the hooded gulls. The bird was a medium-sized gull and more buoyant than the Ring-billed. Overall coloration from above was gray-brown. The head was dusky with white on the cheeks, chin, and upper throat. There was also a small white spot directly above the culmen. The eye was black with a white, broken half crescent behind it. The mantle and wing coverts were gray-brown with white edgings creating a scalloped look. The primaries were black with a narrow secondary bar was edged in white. The rump and rounded tail were black with complete, wide black tail band narrowly edged in white. From below the bird showed dusky breast and flanks with the rest of the underparts white. The underbill was white with sooty gray wide corners forming an incomplete tail band. The underwings were dusky with the exception of dark primaries and dark axillary patches similar to those on a Prairie Falcon. A white trailing edge to the wing was evident. The legs looked black when the bird was in flight, but when sitting they looked gray. The bird spent most of the half hour feeding and circling the river, but stopped briefly on a concrete structure.

Similar species and how eliminated: Size and structure, combined with bill shape, eliminated the "hearing complex" gulls and identified this bird as one of the hooded gulls. Although it was easily picked out of the group of Ring-billed Gulls by virtue of its size, the overall length approached that of a Ring-billed. This size in combination with the lack of any carpal bar and the overall gray-brown appearance eliminated other hooded gulls. The closest other candidate, Franklin's Gull, was eliminated by color, lack of any semblance of a hood, and the complete tail band on the dorsal side.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Gull was observed at various distances, the closest being about 25 feet. Optics included binoculars and scope at 10X on sitting bird.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: This is the third juvenile Laughing Gull I have observed in the Red Rock area. Others have been seen in several areas.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Laughing Gull (Juvenile)

LOCATION: Spillway of Red Rock Dam, Marion County

DATE & TIME: 23 July, 1992 (6:06-6:34PM)

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

OTHER OBSERVERS: With me was Jane Fuller, and MOB reported it during the previous week.

DESCRIPTION: The bird was located almost as soon as we started searching the estimated 50 gulls flying and sitting in the area of the spillway below the Red Rock Dam. It was flying, and spent most of the next half hour in the air. It did sit on a concrete pillar 50 yards away for about five minutes, so we could get good looks with the telescope. Flying, the bird could be picked out immediately from all plumages of the Ring-billed Gulls, because it was generally darker and smaller. The size difference, especially of the head, neck, and bill were even more evident when it was standing with a small group of Ring-billeds.

In flight, the tip half of the upperwing, including the primaries, was a dark gray. The secondaries were also quite dark, with a thin white trailing edge. All other coverts were a lighter gray-brown color with much lighter feather edgings, which gave a scalloped appearance. This was true of the back as well. The underwing, showed the same general darkness to its tip half, but the dark color was not as intense, nor as well demarcated. In the axillary area, there were also diffuse dark areas, somewhat like in Black-bellied Plover, but not as dark or as well demarcated. The tail had a rather wide black tail band, which had a thin white terminal band. The undertail also had a dark band-like area, only more diffuse. The rump was white. In flight, the wingbeat seemed rather shallow.

The sitting bird provided good looks at other features. The head and neck were notably smaller than those of the Ring-billeds, which were next to this bird. The entirely black bill also was slimmer. The culmen was curved, especially toward the tip. The eye was dark, and exhibited a partial white eye-ring above and below the eye, but not centered, rather offset toward the back. The legs were dark gray, but in the telescope some flesh colored tones could be picked up. The folded wing and tail were quite dark. The belly was white, but the top of head, the neck, sides of the breast, and the sides of the belly just under the wings were a gray-

brown color. The throat, however, was light. The gape was pink.

No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This bird was smaller, slimmer, and darker than any plumage of Ring-billed gull, with which direct comparisons were possible. Juvenile Franklin's Gull is smaller, grayer, and has a white foreneck, breast, and belly rather than the gray-brown shown by this bird.

OPTICS and VIEWING CONDITIONS: The evening was heavily overcast, and the sun was not a factor. During flight, I was looking from northwest to east at distances ranging from 25-600 feet using 8.5 X 44 Swift Audubon binoculars. The sitting bird was viewed toward the northwest at a distance of 150 feet using a KOWA TSN-4 telescope with 20-60 X zoom lens, usually set on 20X.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen juveniles of this species at Red Rock on 8/23/90 and 7/25/91. I have also seen this species numerous times on the east and gulf coasts, but never in juvenile plumage.

FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Extensive field notes were made as I watched the bird, and they were used exclusively as a source for this report. National Geographic and Harrison's "Seabirds" were consulted later in the evening, mainly to look at juvenile plumages of other gulls. This form was typed the succeeding day.

DOCUMENTATION

SPECIES: **Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)**

HOW MANY: One (1)

LOCATION: Red Rock Reservoir (below Dam)

HABITAT: Swiftly flowing main channel of water; side channels had visible sandbars and slowly moving water. Spillway below dam. Very large lake on opposite side of dam.

DATE: July 26, 1992

TIME & LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 11:35 - 11:49 a.m. Bird observed flying and sitting.

FIRST OBSERVATION MADE BY: David Arbour (sp?/first sighting date unknown)

DOCUMENTER'S NAME & ADDRESS: Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265

OTHERS WHO SAW BIRD: Reid Allen, 1601 Pleasant Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265

DESCRIPTION OF BIRD: This immature gull (juvenile plumage) was about 1/4 smaller in size than the Ring-billed Gulls with which it was associating. The head and mantle of the gull was a light greyish-chocolate brown. The eye was dark and the black bill was thin, rather narrow, long appearing with a slight drooping effect. The back and wings were "scaley" greyish-chocolate brown and the primaries were very dark, black in color. The gull had a very pale buffy-white belly and there was a darker buffy-brown breast band. It was light underthroat, with this light color extending part way up the side of the neck of the gull. There was a wide black subterminal tail band with a narrow white terminal tail band. The upper tail area was white down to the black band. The legs were long and black. The upperwing area from about the secondaries in toward the body was a mottled light, chocolate grey-brown and there appeared to be a very narrow white trailing edge which did NOT extend all the way out to the primaries. The underwing showed dark primaries with greyish, mottled secondaries.

SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW ELIMINATED: Franklin's Gull eliminated because gull observed was larger than Franklin's; no visible hood on Laughing Gull and the bill was longer, thinner and more "droopy" than a Franklin's. Legs also appeared longer than would be present on a Franklin's Gull.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Partly cloudy sky, with periods of bright sun. Viewed from a distance of approximately 200 feet to 1/4 mile.

DOCUMENTATION

Laughing Gull Documentation cont'd.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

WITH SPECIES:

Have observed many Laughing Gulls in southern Texas in winter seasons; however this is only second close observation of Laughing Gull in juvenile plumage.

EQUIPMENT:

Bushnell 8 x 36 Custom Binoculars

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

After Field Notes made.
 National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Second Edition, c. 1983, 1987.
 P. J. Grant, Gulls: A Guide to Identification, Second Edition, c. 1982, 1986.
 The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, Vol. 2, c. 1983.

HOW LONG BEFORE

FIELD NOTES MADE:

As bird was being observed.

HOW LONG BEFORE THIS

FORM COMPLETED:

August 3-5, 1992.

PHOTOGRAPHIC
INFORMATION:

Photographic slides (2) enclosed. Photographs taken by Reid I. Allen with a Minolta X700 camera with 300 mm lens and 2x converter.

What species? Laughing Gull - (Juvenile) How many? 1Location? Red Rock Reservoir - (Marion Co.)Type of habitat? Below spillway and also at sandy beachWhen? date(s): August 1, 1992 time: 9:10 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.
9:45 a.m. to 9:53 a.m. } approximatelyWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Russ Widnerothers before or after you: As Bob Cecil would say - about everyone - (Before us)

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 bird flying below the spillway first and then watched it at the swim beach at the North Overlook. This gull was with Ring-Billed Gulls at the swim beach. It was of dark brownish-gray coloration over most of its plumage including its head. It had a large all black bill and grayish legs. It had white eye crescents around its eyes. It had a white rump with a wide black tail band. It was smaller in size than Ring-Billed Gulls and slimmer in appearance. In flight below the dam it showed that it had dark brownish upper wing colors with blackish-looking wing tips and a white trailing edge on its wings.

Similar species and how eliminated: A Franklin's Gull juvenile or 1st winter bird would have a whitish breast and a whitish forehead. A juvenile Ring-Billed Gull would be larger in size and proportions, not be as brownish as this bird, and would not have eye crescents.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain: :

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

Sunny - sun behind us both places. 50-60 yards at beach and 25-40 yards below the spillway - estimated. 8x30 Binocs and 22x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Very good studying of juvenile Laughing Gull at Red Rock in summer of 1991.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. Birds of N. America, Robbins' guide, R.T. Peterson's Birds East of the Rockies.

How long before field notes made? Just after this form completed? August 2, 1992
viewing