

Laughing Gull

18 Sep 1993

Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

*Ann Johnson

P-0412, IBL 64:13, 68

Record Number: 93-24

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211 [2/23/94]

PHOTOGRAPH

Reid Allen, P-0412

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:13

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P, Although the lighting in the photo accentuates the hood, the brown coloration, size and curvature of the bill, and lack of white on the primaries is evident.

A-P, Juvenile.



Laughing Gull P-0412
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
18 Sep 1993 Reid Allen

93-24

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DOCUMENTATION FORM
Unusual Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Laughing Gull - juvenile/first winter

Location: Below Saylorville Dam, Polk County, IA

Habitat: Fast moving river with many small fish

Date: 18 September 1993
18 September 1993

Time: 11:45 to 12:10
15:30 to 14:00

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

Other Observers: None at the time

Description of bird: This gull was only slightly smaller than the numerous Ring-billed Gulls with which it was feeding. Structurally it was slimmer, more buoyant, and appeared to have longer wings. The mantle and inner wing were light brown with some developing gray mixed in. The primaries, primary coverts, and secondaries were dark brownish-black. The trailing edge of the secondaries was white as were the rump and tail. The tail was squared off and had a complete and wide terminal band narrowly edged in white. The bill was black, long, and slightly decurved. The legs were black. The nape and head were brown, fading to a white forehead and chin. The darkest brown was in the auricular area. The eye was dark with a narrow white eye ring surrounding it. The breast was light brown, but the lower belly and vent area were white. The under wing was mottled brownish-gray with dark primaries. From below the tail was all white with a black band and no mottling was apparent on the undertail coverts.

Similar species and how eliminated: The body and bill structure eliminated all but hooded gulls and the brown plumage indicated a first year bird. Size close to Ring-billed, in addition to plumage already described, eliminated some of the smaller hooded gulls. The most likely candidate for confusion would be the Franklin's Gull. Juvenile Franklin's shows a hooded pattern early in development rather than a brown wash on the head. Franklin's tail band would also be incomplete with white feathers showing on the outer edge. It would also show fewer dark primaries, with the inner flight feathers more approximating the mantle and inner wing color. No other small gull has this characteristic.

Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics): Optics consisted of 7X26 binoculars. The sky was overcast. The bird was observed at approximately 50 to 100 feet as it circled and occasionally landed in the water catching fish. On 19 September it was also observed swimming in a pond below the dam at about 200 feet.

Previous experience: I have observed a number of juvenile Laughing Gulls both in and out of the state. A number of young birds were seen this summer on the East Coast.

References consulted during observation: NGS Guide

References consulted before completing documentation: NGS Guide

Field notes made: During observation

Documentation completed: Following day