

Black-headed Gull

Record Number: 94-40

2 Aug 1994

Classification: A-P

Spirit L./Kettleon Hogsback A., Dickinson Co., IA

\*\*S. Dinsmore, \*\*\*\*\*

P-0429, P-0431, IBL 65:15, 82, Dins 1996

## DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore (2 Aug, 2 docs), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [6/26/95\*]

Lee A. Schoenewe (2, 3 Aug), 518 W. 4th St., Spencer 51301

Pete Ernzen (Aug), 401 Taylor, Ida Grove

Mark Proescholdt (4 Aug, 2 docs), Box 65, Liscomb 50148

Beth Proescholdt (4 Aug), Box 65, Liscomb 50148

Jim Fuller (4 Aug), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Thomas H. Kent (5 Aug), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

Peter C. Petersen (6 Aug), 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport 52803 Ed Thelen (10 Aug), RR 8725,  
Spirit Lake 51360

Babs and Loren Padelford (12 Aug), 1405 Little John Rd., Bellevue, NE 68005

Pam and Reid Allen (5 Aug) [not reviewed]

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Steve Dinsmore, juvenile, 2 Aug [2nd review], P-0431

Reid Allen, juvenile, 8 Aug [not reviewed], P-0429

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:15

Records Committee: IBL 65:82

Dinsmore, S. J. 1996. Probable breeding of Black-headed Gulls in Northwestern Iowa. Iowa Bird  
Life 66:27-29.

## VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Should these two reports have been lumped? The Kettleon birds offer interesting evidence of  
nearby breeding.A-D, 2 adults, 1 juvenile -- pretty spectacular record. Steve mentions photos. We need to check  
on them.A-D, A rather incredible occurrence, strongly suggestive of nearby nesting. Careful descriptions  
of adults allow conclusion that 2 different adult birds were seen. I saw these birds also, but  
inexplicably did not document them.

## REVOTE (with photo): 7 A-P

A-P, juvenile C. Black-headed Gull.

A-P, juvenile well shown in photo.

cited. I requested verification on 10 reports of more easily identified species that were seen at unusual dates. I received useful additional information on each of these sightings, which will be placed on file. The date was incorrect for two of the reports, which suggests that other dates in Field Reports may be incorrect. It would be helpful if contributors specifically review their reports for dates that seem out of line before they send them in. Also, if you spot an incorrect date in the Field Reports, report it to the author so that a correction can be published.

All reports were received on time, which is greatly appreciated. The quality of the reports was excellent, and some provided an unbelievable amount of data on fall birds in Iowa.

#### CONTRIBUTORS (\* = DOCUMENTATION ONLY)

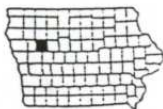
Dick Bierman (DBi), Cherokee; Dennis Carter (DeC), Decorah; Jane R. Clark (JRC), Clive; Raymond L. Cummins (RLC), Centerville; David L. Dankert (DLD), Cedar Rapids; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Ames; Chris Edwards (CE), North Liberty; Bery Engebretsen (BE), Des Moines; Peter Ernzen (PE), Ida Grove; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; \*Charles R. Fuller (CRF), Burlington; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Douglas C. Harr (DCH), Larchwood; \*Terry J. Hulsebus (TJH), Denison; James Huntington (JH), Iowa City; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City, NE; \*Maridel Jackson (MJ), Ankeny; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Darwin Koenig (DK), Ankeny; Sharron R. Laub (SRL), Rippey; Babs K. Padelford (BKP), Bellevue, NE; Loren J. Padelford (LJP), Bellevue, NE; Marietta A. Petersen (MAP), Walnut; Peter C. Petersen (PCP), Davenport; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt (MPr), Liscomb; \*John Rutenbeck (JR), Burlington; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; Dale Stone (DS), Lake City; Dennis Thompson (DT), Johnston; Ed Thelen (ETh), Spirit Lake; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; Phil J. Walsh (PJW), Des Moines; and Hank Zaletel, (HZ) Nevada.

211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246

#### LONG-TAILED JAEGER IN SAC COUNTY

PETER ERNZEN

On the afternoon of 4 September 1994, my 3 1/2 year old son, Joshua and I were bird watching at Tomahawk Marsh 2.9 miles north of Lake View in Sac County. Tomahawk Marsh is divided in half by county road M68. After viewing both sides of the marsh, I decided to concentrate our efforts on the west side. We drove to a gravel road that borders the north boundary of the marsh. While I was viewing several ducks and a Common Moorhen, my attention was distracted by a car horn on M68. Looking in the direction of the noise, I saw several Great Blue Herons flying west. Much to my utter amazement the distinctive form of a Long-tailed Jaeger followed the procession of Great Blue Herons. The two features that were immediately recognizable were the two long pointed tail feathers and the distinctive diamond-shaped tail. In flight the bird appeared to be medium gull sized, but flew tern like.



I followed the bird in flight until it landed on one of the many muskrat dens in the marsh. I immediately observed the bird for about 15 minutes through my spotting scope. The following features were observed as the bird rested: gray body, white chest, black bill, and black crown that came to a point on the back of the head.

Knowing the rarity of this species in Iowa, I decided to attempt to get a closer view of the bird. I was able to approach to within 15-20 feet. In addition to the above details, I was able to discern an inch-wide patch of yellow wash below the eye that extended in front of and behind the eye. When the bird flew, I returned to my car and raced home to report my finding.

On 5 September, Tim Schantz relocated the bird at the southeast corner of Black Hawk Lake five miles southeast of Tomahawk Marsh. The bird stayed in the area for the next 10 days, thrilling birders from Iowa and surrounding states. Interestingly, on the same day an immature Sabine's Gull was also located in the same area. For the next several days, I fielded calls from around the state as to where and if the bird was still around.

This is only the second sighting of this arctic species in Iowa. The previous record was of one collected near Lone Tree in Johnston County in 1907 (Anderson, *Auk* 25:215, 1908). This is the most common of the jaeger species in the arctic, but, because of its highly pelagic winter preferences, it is the least encountered of the three jaeger species in the interior, with only 34 other sightings in the lower 48 states (T. H. Kent, personal communication).

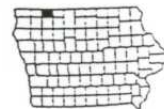
401 Taylor, Ida Grove, IA 51445

#### PROBABLE BREEDING OF BLACK-HEADED GULLS IN NORTHWESTERN IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

At approximately 11:25 a.m. on 2 August 1994, I stopped at the northwestern end of Spirit Lake in Dickinson County. A number of gulls and terns were resting on a rock jetty south of the road, just south of the Iowa-Minnesota state line. Among the gulls was an adult Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), recognizable by its size, blood red bill and legs, dark hood, and very pale gray mantle. I watched the bird as it perched on the jetty for 17 minutes, when it flew and disappeared to the southwest over Spirit Lake. The bird was slightly smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls and was generally a longer, more slender gull. The long legs were bright red. The bill was dark red, slender, straight, and pointed at the tip. The bird still had a well-defined dark brown hood, although there were numerous white flecks, especially around the base of the bill and on the forehead. The neck, breast, belly, undertail, and uppertail were white. The mantle was very pale gray, the same color as the upperwings. The wing pattern was as follows: inner primaries and secondaries and their coverts were pale gray, outer primaries and coverts were white, black tips to at least the outer six primaries, undersides of inner primaries black, underside of outer primary white. The wings extended well beyond the tail tip when the bird was perched.

A short time later, at approximately 12:10 p.m., I stopped to scan a small flock of gulls resting on an island at the Kettleon Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) on the west side of Spirit Lake. After a few minutes, I found a very strange looking gull



walking alone along the edge of the water. My first thought was that the bird might be a juvenile Sabine's Gull. After about 20 minutes, I concluded the bird was a juvenile Black-headed Gull. Almost immediately, an adult Black-headed Gull landed in my scope view and fed the bird a large minnow. The juvenile bird was similar to the adult in size, being slightly larger than a Franklin's Gull. The overall appearance was very rust-colored. The bill was bicolored with the basal two thirds pale pink and the distal one third dark. The head was mostly white, except for a brown cap and a blackish auricular patch. The bird had an incomplete white eyering that was broken in front of the eye. There was a white collar across the back of the neck. The lower hindneck, mantle, and upperwings were dark brown with a scalloped appearance. The mantle and hindneck were slightly darker than the upperwings. The scalloped appearance was created by the buffy or gold tips to the scapulars. The primaries were black, with some white on the outer edge of the wing visible on the perched bird. The underparts were white. On the foreneck, brown color extending forward from each bend in the wing met to form a complete bib. The bib was widest on the sides of the neck, but was connected by only a thin brown line. The tail was white with a narrow black terminal band on the upper surface. The legs were flesh-colored. The upperwing pattern was very striking. There was a brown carpal bar. The outer primaries and tips of several inner primaries were solid black. The secondary coverts were pale gray. The tips of all secondaries were black, creating a black bar along the trailing edge of the wing. The remainder of the upperwing was white. In flight, the undersides of the flight feathers appeared black while the underwing coverts appeared white. The adult with the young bird was very similar to the adult I had seen earlier at the north end of Spirit Lake, and I initially assumed they were the same individual. However, I returned to the north end of Spirit Lake at approximately 4 p.m. that afternoon and found an adult bird still present there. Upon closer examination, the adult at Kettleton WPA had a much more complete hood that lacked white flecking. I also noted that the bird had a partial white eyering, broken in front of the eye. On at least two occasions, the adult at Kettleton WPA attacked Great Blue Herons, presumably in defense on the young bird. Both times, the adult gull repeatedly gave a call that was reminiscent of an American Crow, but higher-pitched.

I observed these birds again on 3 and 5 August 1994. At least one adult remained in the area through 12 August 1994 (Kent 1995). These represent only the second and third records of Black-headed Gull in Iowa. The first record was of an adult on 2, 4 November 1989 at Saylorville Reservoir (Dinsmore 1993). Another adult appeared at Big Creek Lake from 17 to 23 November 1994 (Kent 1995). This species is a rare vagrant to the upper Midwest with fewer than 10 records each from Minnesota, Nebraska, Illinois, and Missouri. All records are of single birds.

Black-headed Gulls first bred in North America in Newfoundland in 1977 (Finch 1978). They have nested only once in the United States, in Massachusetts in 1984 (Holt et al. 1986). There are a few summer records for the upper Midwest, but the only one suggestive of possible breeding was the adult from 28 May into July 1986 in a large Franklin's Gull colony at North Heron Lake in Jackson County, Minnesota (Janssen 1986), about 20 miles northwest of Spirit Lake. A strong case can be made that Black-headed Gulls bred in northwestern Iowa or adjacent Minnesota in 1994. The young are fed and cared for by both parents and leave the nest after about 10 days, but remain nearby. The fledging period is about 35 days (Cramp 1983). While the juvenile bird was clearly capable of flight, it did not appear to be a strong flier. The presence of both adults with the juvenile also supports breeding nearby since both adults feed the young until fledging, usually at intervals of 45 minutes (Brandl and

Nelsen 1988). It is unlikely that the adults would disperse far from the nest site while continuing to feed the young. It seems reasonable to conclude that the birds bred nearby, possibly at or within a few miles of Kettleton WPA. It also seems certain that the birds bred close enough to constitute the second breeding record for this species in the United States.

LITERATURE CITED

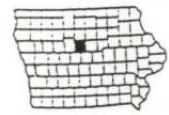
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 Cramp, S. (ed.). 1983. Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. vol. 3. Oxford Univ. Press, London.  
 Dinsmore, S. J. 1993. Common Black-headed Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 63:53-54.  
 Finch, D. W. 1978. Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) breeding in Newfoundland. *American Birds* 32:312.  
 Holt, D. W., J. P. Lortie, B. J. Nikula, and R. C. Humphrey. 1986. First record of Common Black-headed Gulls breeding in the United States. *American Birds* 40:204-206.  
 Janssen, R. B. 1986. Minnesota's first Common Black-headed Gull. *Loon* 58:104-107.  
 Kent, T. H. 1995. Field reports-fall 1994. *Iowa Bird Life* 65:10-20.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames IA 50014

WHIMBREL IN HAMILTON COUNTY

THOMAS H. KENT AND JAMES L. FULLER

On 24 May 1995 at 10:40 a.m., we were driving south on U.S. 69 in north-central Hamilton County when Kent saw a large shorebird silhouetted against the water in a flooded farm field near the road. As we turned around and stopped to look at it, we both shouted "Whimbrel" simultaneously. It was a large brownish shorebird roughly the size of a godwit with long, relatively thick gray bill that became markedly decurved over its distal half. The angle of the bill with the head made the bird look flat headed. There was a distinct white eye line and dark cap with a thin central crown stripe. Otherwise, the bird was a nondescript brown--lighter and plainer below and flecked with feather edgings above. The legs were dark pale gray and the eye was dark. The only other large shorebird with a decurved bill that occurs in Iowa is Long-billed Curlew, which is a much larger bird with longer bill, cinnamon coloration, and no crown stripe. Although we immediately called several birders, to the best of our knowledge, no other birders saw this bird. The Whimbrel is a Casual species in Iowa with records from 6 of the last 10 years, most from mid to late May.



211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246 and 6 Longview Knoll, RR 6, Iowa City, IA 52240



Common Black-headed Gu P-0431  
Kettleon Hogsback, Dickinso Co.  
2 Aug 1994 Steve Dinsmore

94-40

2008 19000 20000-1600 2005

94-40

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Common Black-headed Gull

Number: 1 adult

Location: n. end of Spirit L., Dickinson Co., IA

Habitat: large lake

Date: 2 August 1994

Time: 11:25-11:42 a.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: ?

Description of bird(s): At approximately 11:25 a.m. on August 2, 1994, I stopped at "The Grade" at the northwest end of Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co., Iowa. This is a shallow body of water just south of the Iowa-Minnesota boundary that drains into Spirit Lake. A rock jetty separates the two water bodies, and a number of gulls and terns were roosting on it. Among the gulls was an adult Common Black-headed Gull, recognizable by its size, blood red bill and legs, dark hood, and very pale gray mantle. I watched the bird as it perched on the jetty for 17 minutes, when it took flight and disappeared to the southwest over Spirit Lake. The following is a description of the bird, written during the observation. The bird was slightly smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls and was generally a longer, more slender appearing gull. The legs were bright red, and were proportionally longer than the legs of a Ring-billed Gull. The bill was also dark red, appearing black at the tip. The bill was slender and straight with a pointed tip. There was no obvious gonys. The bird still had a well-defined dark brown hood, though there were numerous white flecks, especially around the base of the bill and on the forehead. The eye appeared dark. The neck, breast, belly, undertail, and uppertail were white. The tail was square-tipped, not forked or wedge-shaped. The mantle was very pale gray, the same color as the upperwings. The wing pattern was as follows: inner primaries and secondaries and their associated coverts were pale gray, outer primaries and coverts were white, black tips to at least the outer six primaries, undersides of inner primaries black, underside of outer two primaries white. The wings extended well beyond the tail tip when the bird was perched. Based on these features, I aged the bird as an adult just beginning the molt to basic plumage. I took several photos and relocated the bird at this location from 10:30-10:47 a.m. on 3 August.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of red bill and legs, brown hood, size, very pale gray mantle and upperwings, and black undersides to the inner primaries eliminates several similar species, including Franklin's, Laughing, Little, Bonaparte's, and Ross' gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with sun to one side. Estimated viewing distance was 100 meters. I used a Kowa 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen this species once before in Iowa, as well as several times in Massachusetts and recently in North Carolina.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America  
Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written with bird under observation  
How long before this form completed: 4 August 1994

94-40

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Common Black-headed Gull

Number: 1 adult, 1 juvenile

Location: Kettleon Waterfowl Production Area, Dickinson Co., IA

Habitat: shallow marsh

Date: 2 August 1994 (also 3,5 August)

Time: 12:12-2:33 p.m., 5:40-8:14 p.m. on 8/2

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: LaVonne Foote, Lee Schoenewe, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): At approximately 12:10 p.m., I stopped to scan a small flock of gulls resting on an island at the Kettleon Waterfowl Production Area on the west side of Spirit Lake. After a couple of minutes, I found a very strange looking gull walking alone along the edge of the water. My first thought, after several minutes, was that the bird might be a juvenile Sabine's Gull, but several features didn't fit. Finally, after about 20 minutes, I concluded the bird was a juvenile Common Black-headed Gull. Within a couple of minutes, I was surprised to have an adult Common Black-headed Gull land in my scope view and feed the bird in question a large minnow. The adult bird was very similar to the adult I had seen earlier at the north end of Spirit Lake, and I initially assumed they involved the same individual. However, I returned to the north end of Spirit Lake at approximately 4 p.m. that afternoon and found an adult bird still present. Upon closer examination, I noted that the adult at Kettleon WPA had a much more complete hood lacking any white flecking. I also noted several additional features not seen earlier on the Spirit Lake bird. The bird had a partial white eyering, broken in front of the eye. The adult bird fed the juvenile on at least eight occasions on 2-3 August. In all cases, the food was a large minnow of about 3 inches in length. The adult appeared to be foraging on Hottes L., as all its flights to and from the WPA were in that direction (NW of the WPA). On at least two occasions, the adult at Kettleon WPA attacked Great Blue Herons, presumably in defense on the young bird. Both times, the bird repeatedly gave a call that was reminiscent of an American Crow, but higher-pitched.

The appearance of the juvenile bird was as follows. The bird was similar to the adult bird in size, being slightly larger than a Franklin's Gull. The overall appearance was very rusty. The bill was obviously bicolored-the basal 2/3 were pale pink and the distal 1/3 was dark. The distinction between the pink and dark colors was not sharply demarcated. The head was mostly white, except for a brown cap and a blackish auricular patch. I also noted an incomplete white eyering, broken in front of the eye. The bird also had a white collar across the back of the neck. The lower hindneck, mantle, and upperwings were dark brown with a scalloped appearance (the mantle and hindneck were slightly darker than the upperwings). The scalloping was due to the buffy or almost gold tips to the scapulars. The primaries were black, with some white on the outer edge of the wing visible on the perched bird. The underparts were entirely white. On the foreneck, brown color extending forward from each bend in the wing met to form a complete bib. The bib was widest on the sides of the neck, but was connected by only a thin brown line. The tail was white with a narrow black terminal band visible on the upper surface. The legs were flesh-colored. The upperwing pattern was very striking (and also difficult to

describe). There was a brown carpal bar, the outer primaries were entirely black, the tips of several inner primaries were also black, the secondary coverts were pale gray, the tips to all secondaries were black (created a black bar along the inner trailing edge of the wing), and the remainder of the upperwing was white. The undersides of the flight feathers appeared black while the underwing coverts appeared white.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of red bill and legs, brown hood, size, very pale gray mantle and upperwings, and black undersides to the inner primaries separated the adult from several similar species, including Franklin's, Laughing, Little, Bonaparte's, and Ross' gulls. The juvenile was unlike any other gull I've ever seen. The combination of size, bicolored bill, flesh-colored legs, and upperwing pattern, coupled by the fact that it was being fed by an adult bird, should safely eliminate other gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun to one side under partly cloudy skies. Estimated viewing distance was mostly 50-150 meters. I used Leica 10x42 binoculars and a Kowa 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen this species once before in Iowa, as well as several times in Massachusetts and recently in North Carolina.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America  
Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written during observation

How long before this form completed: completed 4 August 1994



94-40

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species            How many?    BLACKHEADED GULL    2 AD 1 IM  
 Location?    KETTLESON HOGSBACK WPA (1AD + 1IM) / NORTH SHORE BIG SPIRIT LAKE  
 Type of habitat?    RESTORED MARSH AND LAKESHORE ROCK REEF    1 AD  
 When? date(s): 8/213/94 Time: .6:00-8:00 PM & 9:00-10:00 AM

Who? your name and address

LEE A. SCHOENEWE 518 W. 4<sup>th</sup> ST. SPENCER, IA. 51301

Others with you STEVE DINSMORE, NANCY SCHOENEWE, EUGENE + ELOISE ARMSTRONG

Others before and after you STEVE DINSMORE / M. O.B.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and behavior. OBSERVED A SMALL, DARK-HEADED GULL WITH RED LEGS AND A RED BILL. HOOD WAS CHOCOLATE BROWN INSTEAD OF BLACK. LIGHTER GRAY MANTLE REVEALED WHITE OUTER PRIMARIES IN FLIGHT AND DARK UNDERWING. IMMATURE BIRD HAD A MEDIUM BROWN AND WHITE PATTERN THAT SET IT APART FROM ALL OTHER GULLS IN THE AREA. TOP OF THE HEAD WAS BROWN WITH A BROWN LINE UNDER THE EYE EXTENDING TO A BROWN EAR PATCH. A WHITE EYE PATCH AND WHITE COLLAR ON THE NAPE OF THE NECK WERE DISTINCT. MANTLE WAS BROWN AND WHITE WITH A BROWN, GRAY AND WHITE PATTERN IN FLIGHT. SECOND ADULT WAS SEPARATE FROM OTHER 2 BIRDS AND HAD WHITE REPLACING THE DARK HOOD

Similar species and how eliminated: FRANKLIN'S GULL - CHOCOLATE BROWN HEAD; WHITE OUTER PRIMARIES; DARK UNDERWING. BONAPARTE'S GULL - BLOOD RED BILL; CHOCOLATE BROWN HEAD; DARK UNDERWING

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: DAYLIGHT WITH CLOUDS, 100-200 YDS, 8X40 BINOCULARS  
20X60X SCOPE

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

FRANKLIN'S + BONAPARTE'S GULLS IN MIGRATION

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE  
 this form completed? SAME DAY

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

1994 94-40

What species? *Common Black Headed Gull.* How many? *1 adult*

Location? *Kettleon Hogback WPA*

Type of Habitat? *pond*

When? date(s) *August* time: *5:15* to *5:45*

Who? your name and address: *PETE ERNZEN 401 TAYLOR*

Others with you: *NONE*

Others before or after you: *SEVERAL - STEVE DINSMORE FOUND BIRD*

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. *SIZE OF FRANKLINS GULL, DARK BROWN HOOD, red feet & bill, gray mantled, white leading edge to wings - darker underside to wings.*

Similar species: how eliminated: *Franklins, brown hood, red bill more red feet, white leading edge of wings. Bonapartes is smaller has black hood and bill* <sup>does not have.</sup>

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? If yes, explain: *No.*

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. *100-300 ft. sitting & in flight. (est.)*

*Bushnell Falcon 7x35 357x4000 coated lens.*  
*Bushnell Sky rover 9x30 w/otafocus*

Previous experience with species and similar ones: *None - Bonapartes & Franklins I have observed repeatedly*

References and persons consulted before writing description: *National Geographies Field Guide to Birds of N.A.*

How long before notes completed? *Immediately in car.*

What species? Common Black-headed Gull How many? 1 adult

Location? Kettleon Waterfowl Production Area - (Dickinson County)

Type of habitat? Small water area with an island and just west of Spirit Lake

When? date(s): Aug. 4, 1994 time: 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
4:55 p.m. to 5:20 p.m.

Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148

others with you: Beth Proescholdt

others before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Jim Fuller, ~~John~~ <sup>Beth</sup> Brown, Tom Kent, many others

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.

This gull had a dark brown complete hood on its head and a large bill like a Laughing Gull's bill. Saw dark red bill and dark red legs and feet very well the second sighting especially. <sup>At</sup> other times the bill and legs looked dark. The upper wings had a white wedge at the outer primaries like a Bonaparte's Gull's wings. It had a light gray back and on the rest of the upper wings. The underwings looked quite dark at the primaries. It had a white tail. It looked large in flight and not tern-like such as a Bonaparte's appears. Saw fly 3-4 times. Once it landed on the small island next to an adult Franklin's Gull. It appeared about the same size but had a dark brown head and no eye crescents compared to the Franklin's which had a very black head and vivid eye crescents. The first sighting time the gull was on the edges of the pond by itself. Saw it chase a Great Blue Heron once.

Similar species and how eliminated: Bonaparte's Gulls are smaller, do not have reddish bills or dark on the primaries of the underwings, and are tern-like in flight. Franklin's Gulls do not have the white wedge on the upper wings.

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 at side, sun almost behind us at 2<sup>nd</sup> sighting; Distances were estimated from 110 yards away to 80 yards away; 22x Scope, 8x30 Binocs

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have never seen one before. Have seen lots of Bonaparte's and Franklin's Gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. guide, Robbins' Birds of N. America, Peterson's Guide - (Eastern)

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? Sept. 24, 1994

What species? Common Black-headed Gull - <sup>Juvenile</sup> How many? 1

Location? Kettleeson Waterfowl Production Area - (Dickinson County)

Type of habitat? Small water area with an island just west of Spirit Lake

When? date(s): Aug. 4, 1994 time: 2:10 p.m. to 3:38 p.m.  
4:55 p.m. to 5:20 p.m.

Who? your name and address: Merk Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148

others with you: Beth Proescholdt

others before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Tim Schantz, Jim Fuller, many observers

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 located this bird on the ~~small~~ Small island which had other gulls and terns on it. It appeared larger than the Franklin's Gulls beside it and was smaller than Ring-billed Gulls. It was noticeably different from the other birds with a brownish nape and brownish color on its back. It had a brownish color on its shoulders or front of the neck that somewhat resembled a partial necklace-look of a Snowy Plover. It had pinkish-yellowish legs and its bill had a pinkish base with a dark tip. It had a partial hood-look and had a dark smudge behind its eye.

We did see it fly at least once. In flight a white wedge on the outer primaries on the upper wing was seen. It had a white tail with a black terminal tail band on it. The underwing showed a dark smudge-look on the outer primaries. It had a white leading edge on upper wings. The upper wings looked similar to the immature pattern of a Bonaparte's Gull with dark markings across the wings somewhat like an "M". It was in the same area as an adult Common Black-headed Gull which is documented separately.

Similar species and how eliminated:

A Bonaparte's Gull is smaller, lacks the dark smudge of the outer primaries on the underwing, and is more tern-like in flight.

A Little Gull is smaller than a Bonaparte's Gull and lacks the white wedge on the upper wing of the outer primaries.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Sunny, good viewing. Sun at side, 80-90 yards away on island and 90-100 yards away when it flew to the point (estimated). 8X30 Binocs and 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have never seen this bird. Have seen many imm. Bonaparte's Gulls and one adult Little Gull.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. guide, Robbins' guide, Peterson's guide, and Audubon Master Guide to Birding

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? Aug. 12, 1994

94-40

What species? Common Black-headed Gull How many? 2Location? Kattleson Hogback marsh by Spirit LakeType of habitat? marsh with open water, + long, narrow islandWhen? date(s): August 4, 1994 time: 2:00 to 3:38 + 4:55 to 5:20Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Mark Proescholdtothers before or after you: many observers

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.

Mark spotted the <sup>adult</sup> gull flying over pond + we saw a dark brown-headed gull, light gray mantle, white tail, upperwings with large white triangular wedge on leading edge, under wings with dark smudges. Bill was dark red, quite long, slightly down-curved, esp. at tip; dark red legs seen when it fluttered up. Less bouyant than a Bonaparte's + larger, about size of Franklin's or a bit larger. It flew, it preened, this adult Common Black-headed Gull, + as we watched the immature it disappeared. At our second stop there it reappeared on the spit, flew toward island next to a Franklin's Gull, after bathing + preening. This was a chance for a good comparison with its dark brown head + no noticeable eye crescent contrasting with the Franklin's jet-black head and vivid eye crescents. The C. Black-headed was a bit larger.

Similar species and how eliminated:

any gull — Franklin's, Bonaparte's, Black-legged  
Kettwaker — I explained in description (over)

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain: :

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

sun from side at first sighting, better lighting later, sun behind us  
Bushnell scope 22 wide angle + Nikon 8x30 binocs. — 70-80 yards. almost

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

References and persons consulted before writing description:

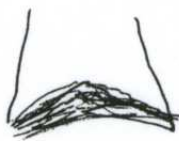
We studied all guides before we saw birds  
How long before field notes made? as I watched this form completed? Sept 24

the immature Common Black-headed Gull 94-40  
was first seen on the island with other gulls  
(Ring-billed + Franklin's) and Forster's Terns,  
standing it was a combination of white and  
cinnamon brown with tan/pink legs and tan/pink  
bill with dark tip. Undersides were white, head  
was white but showed a hint of a dark head "cap"  
with a faint pattern of brown.

When it flew we saw the pattern of an  
immature Black-legged Kittiwake or a Bonaparte's,  
but the "bar" <sup>slanting</sup> from the back across the secondary  
coverts were cinnamon instead of black,  
and the undersides of wings had a dark triangle  
on flight feathers (not white as a Bonaparte's),  
The tail was tipped with an even band of  
dark, not indented as a Black-legged Kittiwake:



not



The leading edge of wings was whitish,  
then the cinnamon brown band +  
finally a darker trailing edge, more  
prominent than a Bonaparte's. Its white  
undersides had cinnamon smudges on edge of  
breast, with a small dark smudge in eye area.  
Great birds that Stew Denmare found!!

## DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

94-40

SPECIES: Common Black-headed Gull (adult and juvenile)

LOCATION: Pond on Kettleson Waterfowl Production Area (Dickinson Co.).

DATE & TIME: 4 August, 1994 (7:11-7:50 AM and 8:40-8:55 AM)

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

OTHER OBSERVERS: Found by Steve Dinsmore. I was with Tim Schantz. MOB before and after.

BACKGROUND: Steve Dinsmore reported a juvenile and an adult bird of this species at this location and an adult on a rock jetty at the north end of Big Spirit Lake on August 2. Tim Schantz and I arrived shortly after 7 AM and immediately found the juvenile on a small island in the pond. An adult arrived about ten minutes later. The juvenile displayed begging behavior and the adult appeared to feed it. We watched both birds for another half hour, and then attempted to locate the other adult with no success. Returning to the original location, we watched both birds again for about fifteen minutes.

DESCRIPTION (General): Both juvenile and adult were smaller and sleeker than the nearby Ring-billed Gulls, but were about twice the size of Forster's Terns. They were long-winged, and on the standing birds, the primary projection was well beyond the tail, about two inches. The head seemed small and the bill was long and thin.

DESCRIPTION (Juvenile): The upperparts were a brown-gray on the back and back of head. There was also a continuation of this color down the side of the neck. The tail and folded wing tips were black, and there was a brownish carpal bar. Beneath the carpal bar, the wing was a light gray. There was a smudgy black spot behind the eye. Otherwise, the underparts were white, as was the rump. The eye was dark. The bill was long and thin with a yellowish base (2/3), and dark tip (1/3). The legs were a pinkish-yellow color. The bird did fly a short distance several times, and it seemed to be relatively long-winged. It had a light-dark W pattern on the upperwing, much like a young Bonaparte's Gull. The outer primaries were black, and there was a black trailing edge. The underwing flight feathers were a dusky gray color. There was a black tail band, about one inch in width.

Behavior: The bird never seemed to be still. It walked around picking at the sand, or preened. It also exhibited begging behavior from the Forster's Terns and Ring-billed Gulls, as well as from the adult.

DESCRIPTION (Adult): The underparts were white, and the back and folded wing were a pale gray, except the wing tips which were black. The head had a dark brown hood, which extended only to the back of the head (not the nape). There was a little white in the hood, like the bird was beginning to molt. The eye was dark and had a light eye ring, but only toward the distal. The bill and legs were both a dark red. In flight, the outer primaries on the upperwing were white with black tips, but the rest of the upperwing was pale gray. The underwing showed dark outer primaries. The tail was white and rounded on the end, and lacked any terminal band.

SIMILAR SPECIES: No other small adult gull has a brown hood with both red legs and red bill, nor an underwing pattern like this bird. Bonaparte's Gull is much smaller and has a dark bill, and the underwing is light in the primaries. In the juvenile, the brown on the back and side of neck is unique, as are the leg and bill color. No one disagreed with the identification.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: The birds were viewed at 50-100 yards, It was early morning on a clear day, looking toward the south and southwest. They were viewed in flight with Swift Audubon (8.5 X 44) binoculars and otherwise with KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I had seen two adults on Attu in May, 1993.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were made as I watched the birds, and this form was typed on 9 August. No field guide was consulted until we were back in the car, and then the NGS was seen.

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

94-40

**Species:** Common Black-headed Gull; **Number:** 1 juvenile, 1 adult

**Location:** Kettleon-Hogsback A., Dickinson Co., IA

**Date:** 5 August 1994; **Time:** 11:45 a.m. to about 1:00 p.m. and 1:50 p.m. to about 2:30 p.m.

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

**Others before/with/after:** found by Steve Dinsmore, seen by many

**Habitat and circumstances:** open pond bordered by grassy fields (both birds) and marsh with open water (adult)

**Description of bird:** When I arrived with Pam and Reid Allen the juvenile was on a dirt island in the middle of the pond.

According to Russ Widner, who was there with Beth Brown, Phil McFadden, and Bill Huser, the adult had just left. The juvenile was smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls and much larger than Forster's Terns. I think it was larger than the Franklin's Gull also present but not in the same field of view. It had a mottled brown back. In flight, the wings were black at the tip from above and below. There was a prominent mottled tan-brown carpal bar. Between the black and brown there was considerable white on the upper wing surface. The tail was white with a thin black terminal (may have been subterminal) bar. The head had a peculiar appearance that varied with the viewing angle. There was variably a vertical line or spot in the auricular area with dark extending below the eye toward the bill. There also appeared to be some dark on the top of the head. This dark coloration appeared brown at times. Between the dark areas the face appeared white or gray. The back of the sitting bird was mottle tan-brown and this coloration extended for a considerable distance up the hind neck but was separated from the color on the head by a broad white neck collar that swept up from the sides and across the upper nape. The bill was thinner and shorter than that of a Ring-billed Gull. The gray at the tip shaded to pale yellow at the base. I did not make any notes on leg color. The juvenile bird was seen on the small island spit, in the water, flying, and on the far shore and was present throughout the viewing periods.

The adult was not seen until the second visit to the area with Pam and Reid Allen. It was sitting on the far shore on a small spit. It had a dark brown hood that did not extend very far back on the nape. (It was not as far back as the Franklin's hood.) I thought I could detect a very small amount of white above and below the eye. The bill was small and thin and dark maroon. The legs were red-pink, and so was the foot when one was raised. On the sitting bird, the underparts were white and the upper parts were light gray except for black primaries. In flight, there was a prominent white leading edge to the outer wing, both from above and below. The trailing edge of the entire wing was black. From below, the area between the leading and trailing edges was charcoal black fading to lighter toward the inner most aspect of the underwing. The tail was white. No other birds were nearby for direct size comparison. We watched the bird fly toward West Hottes Lake (really a marsh). We later went over there and saw the adult flying around for a minute or two and confirmed earlier observations on the flying bird.

**Voice:** not heard.

**Similar species:** The brown head, red bill, and wing pattern of the adult easily exclude Bonaparte's and Little gulls. The larger size, two-toned bill, peculiar head pattern, and wing pattern also separate the juvenile from these species.

**Any one have reservations?:** no

**Light:** We looked at both birds with mid-day sunlight looking south, but we walked around the pond to look at the juvenile to the north, and at Hottes Lake we viewed the adult to the north; **Distance:** 20 to 100 yards; **Optics:** 10x binocular, 20x scope.

**Previous experience:** I have seen one alternate-plumaged adult on Attu.

**References before/after viewing:** I glanced briefly at field guides and gull books while viewing the birds, and consulted the same sources while composing the "similar species."

**Time of notes:** during observation period; **Final typing:** 2 days



DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-40

What species? Common Black-headed Gull How many? 2

Location? Sunken Lake + Hottes Lake, w/o Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co.

Type of Habitat? glacial lakes, one marsh fringed, one with mud shores

When? date(s): 7 Aug, 1994 time: 10:45 to 11:00 AM CST

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Dav IA 52829

Others with you: Brian + Corey Blevins, Kelly McKay

Others before or after you: Steve Drusmore, Jim Fuller, Bob Livermore, Tim Scheue, <sup>4/10/94</sup>

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.

Imm. - a bit smaller than nearby Ring-bills, body + head white except black spot behind eye, bill two-toned, light flesh colored base + dark tip, legs ~~pale~~ <sup>lightish</sup>. In flight brown across dorsal surface of wings, white triangle at tip of primaries, dark brown carpal bar

Ad. in flight only - dark brown - blackish hood, not extending over back + head, red bill, light gray mantle, white triangle at tip of primaries, black edging on primaries, primaries dark grey - black below, legs red.

Similar species; how eliminated: Bonaparte's Gull. - imm. - all dark bill, smaller, ad. dark bill, lacks blackish under primaries, smaller  
Franklin's Gull. imm. - more black on head, dark legs, smaller  
ad. darkish grey mantle, then white, black + white at tips of primaries.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.  
imm. - in flight from 50m, standing 200m. ad. in flight - 20m. - est.  
sun behind observers - various binocs including Zeiss 10x40 for me.  
Kowa scope at 30-40x on imm.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: imm. once in Illinois. Have seen many times in Europe + Asia.

References and persons consulted before writing description: checked after writing description

How long before field notes made? 5 min. this form completed? 7 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

What species? Common Black-headed Gull How many? 1Location? NORTH SHORE OF BIG SPIRIT LAKE, Dickinson County Crandall's BeachType of habitat? Natural LAKE - 5,000 acresWhen? date(s): AUG 10, 1994 time: 4:10 to 4:20Who? your name and address: Ed Thelen RR 8725 SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA 57360others with you: \_\_\_\_\_others before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

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.

Drove up to Crandall's beach on Big Spirit and using spotting scope observed a brown-headed gull on the swimming platform. Only after consulting my field guide did I realize that this was the black-headed gull. It was similar to some nearby bonapartes but somewhat larger, also its bill was red and its brown head coloration on the nape did not extend down as far as the bonapartes did. I did not see the bird fly.

Similar species and how eliminated:

bonapartes - it had a red bill  
brown head color

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, explain:

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

GOOD, Sunny clear  
spotting scope - Discoverer 15x60x

Previous experience with species and similar ones: NONEReferences and persons consulted before writing description: Aukon's Society Master Guide to Birding  
Birds of N. America - Zim RobbinsHow long before field notes made? Next day this form completed? Nov 30, 1994MAIL TO: J. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

94-40

Babs & Loren Padelford  
1405 Little John Rd.  
Bellevue, NE 68005

Documentation of Common Black headed Gull

Location: North end of Spirit Lake on the rock jetty

Date: August 12, 1994 Time: 5:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Light conditions: Overcast

Description of bird: One adult bird was seen. It was a large, black headed gull, slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull that was present for direct comparison. It was slimmer than the Ring-billed. The black hood on the head came up higher on the back of the head than the hood of the Franklin's Gull. The shorter hood was quite obvious. The bill appeared to be a very dark red, and was long and slender. It was almost as long as the bill of the Ring-billed. The eye had white crescents. It seemed to be moulting around the face, as it was whitish behind the bill. The tail was all white. At rest the long wings were black at the primary tips, with white along the outer primaries. In flight the underwings were white at the outer primaries and dark on the inner primaries. The mantle was a lighter gray color than the mantle of the Ring-billed Gulls. The legs were short and dark. Once it stretched out its leg, and the foot appeared to be red in color.

Behavior: The bird was sitting on a rock where it preened most of the time we were watching it. It flew up briefly when a Ring-billed Gull flew close to it. When sitting, the bird had a more erect or taller look than the Franklin's Gull.

Distance from bird: approximately 100 yards

Equipment used: Bushnell Spacemaster 25x, and 40x Kowa

Other observers: Roland Barth (Omaha, NE), Kim Eckert  
(Duluth, MN)

This documentation is being written on 8/18/94 from notes that were made immediately after the sighting.

## DOCUMENTATION

94-40  
not reviewed

**SPECIES:** Common Black-Headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

**HOW MANY:** 2 (This particular documentation identifies only the juvenile/first-winter bird and does not document the adult which was also present)

**LOCATION:** Dickinson County, Kettleston Waterfowl Production Area

**HABITAT:** Enclosed freshwater pothole.

**DATE:** 5 August, 1994

**TIME & LENGTH OF OBSERVATION:** Off and on from 10:30 a.m. 'til 12:30 p.m.

**FIRST OBSERVATION MADE BY:** Steve Dinsmore

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

**OTHERS WHO SAW BIRD:** Many other observers

**DESCRIPTION OF BIRD:** Chocolate brown color over mantle. Wide white collar. Chocolate brown and white mottling on back and wings down to light tail. Head was small, rounded and patterned with greyish-chocolate markings, almost cap-like except for a light spot on top of the head. The eye appeared to have a white crescent behind it with a dark smudge behind that. The bill was two-tone, pale at the back end with a dark tip. The legs were a light fleshy color. There was almost a "chin-strap" on the side of the neck. The gull was quite a bit slimmer and smaller than the Ring-Billed Gulls feeding nearby. It sat rather daintily on the water. The sides were a greyish-chocolate brown color and the wingtips were black. The trailing edges of the wings were black and the leading edges of the wing were white over the wrist. The undertail coverts were white and the tail was white with a black band at the end. The dark trailing edge extended all the way along the lower edge of wing to the primaries. The wing had an indescrpt mottled pattern. The wings did not extend beyond the tail.

**SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW ELIMINATED:** Bonaparte's Gull eliminated because of smaller size and two-toned bill on Common Black-Headed Gull.

**VIEWING CONDITIONS:** Clear day.

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH SPECIES:** None.

**EQUIPMENT:** Kowa TSN-4 spotting scope; Bushnell 8x36 Custom Binoculars.  
Minolta X-700 camera.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED:** FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA, National Geographic Society, Second Edition, 1987.  
SEABIRDS, Harrison, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985  
GULLS, a Guide to Identification, Grant, 1986.

**HOW LONG BEFORE FIELD NOTES MADE:** While viewing bird.

**HOW LONG BEFORE THIS FORM COMPLETED:** January 31, 1994.

**PHOTOGRAPH:** Photographs (6) enclosed taken by Reid I. Allen on August 5, 1994.