

Little Gull  
14 Nov 1994  
Big Creek L., Polk Co., IA  
\*S. Dinsmore, \*\*\*\*\*  
P-0432, IBL 65:15, 81, Dinsmore 1995

Record Number: 94-39  
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore (14 Nov), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [6/26/95\*].  
Jim Dinsmore (14 Nov), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014  
Thomas H. Kent (15 Nov), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 42246  
Ann Johnson (16 Nov), 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211  
Jim Fuller (16 Nov), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240  
Mark Proescholdt (16 Nov), Box 65, Liscomb 50148  
Beth Proescholdt (16 Nov), Box 65, Liscomb 50148  
Ray Cummins (17 Nov)  
Chris Edwards (20 Nov), 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317

PHOTOGRAPH

Steve Dinsmore, 14 November [2nd review], P-0432

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:15  
Records Committee: IBL 65:81  
Dinsmore, S. J. 1995. Little Gull at Big Creek L. Iowa Bird Life 65:85-86.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, What -- no photos?

A-D, Descriptios adequately eliminate other possibilities, particularly Common Black-headed and Ross' Gull. I saw this bird too, but inexplicably did not document it.

REVOTE (with photos): 7 A-P

A-P, Photo OK along with description; very short bill apparent.

Rapp, W. F. 1955. The Vermilion Flycatcher in Nebraska. *Nebraska Bird Review* 23:29.

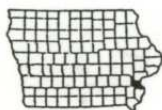
Stone, T. 1995. Purple Gallinule in Bremer County. *Iowa Bird Life* 65:52.

211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246

## RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD USE OF BUR-CUCUMBER DURING FALL MIGRATION, 1994: A POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO POST-FLOOD HABITAT CHANGES

JAMES QUINLIVAN, MICHAEL BORNSTEIN, AND KELLY J. MCKAY

The Great Flood of 1993 had varying effects on the wildlife and plant communities of the Upper Mississippi River. While the effects on avian species and floodplain vegetation are still unfolding, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen to take advantage of a post-flood change in the forest understory at one floodplain site during the 1994 fall migration.



Surveys of nongame migratory birds, with a special focus on neotropical migrants, were conducted on the Big Timber Division of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge in 1994. The Big Timber Division is a 1,758 acre unvegetated backwater complex of bottomland timber and forested wetlands and sloughs, located along the west bank of Pool 17 of the Upper Mississippi River, Louisa County, Iowa. The entire area was severely affected by the record flooding of 1993, which inundated much of the bottomland forest with up to six feet of water. We conducted 1994 fall migration surveys using a modified area search technique (Ralph et al., 1993). This involved recording all birds seen or heard within a four-hour period, beginning at sunrise, while slowly walking through a selected area. During these surveys, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen in unusual abundance.

Hummingbirds were seen actively feeding from the small white flowers of bur-cucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*). This vine was present in very limited abundance prior to the flooding of 1993, when habitat surveys indicated the forest understory was dominated by poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and herbaceous species such as beggarticks (*Bidens sp.*) and wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*). In 1994, bur-cucumber was the dominant understory species, often blanketing the forest floor and smaller trees.

The 1994 fall migration resulted in documentation of an unusually large number of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. One observer recorded 78 individual hummingbirds while walking a distance of only 2 kilometers on 31 August. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds accounted for 15% of 1,053 individual birds of 61 species recorded during field surveys on that date. Hummingbirds appeared to concentrate their foraging activities exclusively on bur-cucumber, and were not seen feeding on any other plant. Bur-cucumber flowers were most abundant during the last week of August, coinciding with the greatest number of hummingbirds (156) recorded on weekly fall surveys.

Interspecific and intraspecific competition for available bur-cucumber flowers and territory surrounding bur-cucumber was often observed. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds aggressively flew towards Indigo Buntings, Yellow Warblers, and other hummingbirds in the area, usually driving off rivals and intruders.

Other researchers have suggested that post-flood habitat conditions in the forested floodplain may have benefited Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (Low 1994), and effects on the entire floodplain forest bird community can be speculated. Bur-cucumber can become more abundant in disturbed bottomland forest due to increased light penetration on the forest floor (Jahn and Anderson, 1986). Flood-related tree mortality, which resulted in the failure of many species to leaf out in the spring of 1994 (National Biological Service et al., 1994), may have provided the more open conditions preferred by bur-cucumber. While the specific importance of bur-cucumber in meeting Ruby-throated Hummingbird life history requirements is unknown, our observations suggest that bur-cucumber may be highly significant to this species when available during migration, and further emphasizes the importance of floodplain forest resources for migratory birds.

### LITERATURE CITED

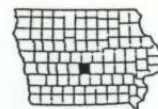
- Jahn, L. A., and R. V. Anderson. 1986. The Ecology of Pools 19 and 20, Upper Mississippi River: A Community Profile. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Biological Report 85(7.6).
- Low, J. 1994. Going with the Flow: The Great Flood of 1993 and its impact on birds. *Birder's World* 8(4):16-20.
- National Biological Service, Illinois Natural History Survey, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. 1994. Long Term Resource Monitoring Program 1993 Flood Observations. National Biological Service, Environmental Management Technical Center, Onalaska, Wisconsin. LTRMP 94-S011.
- Ralph, C. J., C. R. Geupel, P. Pyle, T. E. Martin, and D. F. DeSante. 1993. Handbook of field methods for monitoring landbirds. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Forest Research Station, Albany, California. General Technical Report PSW-GTR-144.

Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge, Wapello District, 10728 County Road X61, Wapello, IA 52653 (JQ, MB) and Midwest Raptor Research Fund, 6143 34th Ave., Moline, IL 61265 (KJM).

### ✓ LITTLE GULL AT BIG CREEK LAKE

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 14 November 1994, I was scanning hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls at Big Creek Lake, Polk County, when I noticed a smaller gull with dark underwings which I recognized as an adult Little Gull. I watched the bird from 10:52 a.m. to 1:08 p.m. and took several photos of the bird from a boat. The bird remained at this location through 19 November.



94-39



Compared to a Bonaparte's Gull, this bird was roughly 10-15% smaller. The wings were much more rounded at the tips, and the bird flew with noticeably faster and deeper wingbeats. The upperwings were entirely pale gray, with a narrow white border along the trailing edge of the wing (e.g., white tips to each of the flight feathers). The undersides of the flight feathers were black, except for a narrow white trailing edge. The axillars were paler and grayish in color. The tail was white and square-tipped. The uppertail contrasted with the slightly darker gray mantle and upperwings. The underparts were entirely white. The head was white with a dark gray cap, visible both in flight and when the bird perched on the water. There was an obvious dark spot behind the eye, similar to that of a Bonaparte's Gull. The head seemed small and dove-like, accentuated by the large eye. The legs were bright red. The bill was black, and slightly shorter than that of a Bonaparte's Gull. I aged the bird as an adult, probably in third-basic plumage since birds in second-basic plumage usually show some black on the upper surface of the primaries.

This represents the fourth record of a Little Gull in Iowa. Other records are of a first-winter bird on 27 October 1988 at Saylorville Reservoir (pers. obs.), an adult on 8 October 1989 at Saylorville Reservoir (Dinsmore et al., *Iowa Bird Life* 60:77, 1990), and an adult on 23 April 1992 south of Council Bluffs (*Iowa Bird Life* 63:77, 1993). Records of this species are increasing in the Midwest, with most records in April and from October to December.

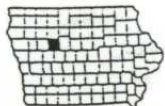
4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

## CLARK'S GREBE IN CALHOUN COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 25 November 1994, I observed an adult Clark's Grebe at South Twin Lake, Calhoun County. The lake was 99% frozen, and the grebe was resting on the ice at least 200 meters from open water. I studied the bird from 8:25-8:55 a.m. and made the following brief notes. Size was hard to judge since the bird was alone, although it was clearly longer and slimmer than some nearby Mallards. The bird was similar to a Western Grebe with a white throat and breast, black crown, back of the neck, mantle, and upperwings, a long, slender, pointed bill, and very long, swan-like neck. Other features noted included white lores (not gray or black) and white color surrounding the eye, though it appeared to be grayish just above and behind the eye. The flanks were very white mixed with some light gray color and were noticeably paler than the mantle and upperwings. The bill was bright orange, not dull yellow-green as on a Western Grebe. The combination of bill color, white lores, and pale flanks eliminates the possibility of a Western Grebe or a hybrid of the two species.

I took two distant but identifiable photos, the first such evidence of this species in the state. This represents about the fifth record of this species in Iowa. Other records include one on 5 May 1983 at Cone Marsh, Louisa County (*Iowa Bird Life* 53:48, 1983), one on 12-13 October 1985 at Big Creek Lake and nearby Saylorville Reservoir (Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 56:31, 1986), three on 30 May 1986 at Hendrickson Marsh, Story County (*Iowa Bird Life* 56:82, 1986), and one



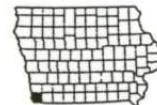
on 13, 19 May 1994 at Trumbull Lake, Clay County (Brewer, *Iowa Bird Life* 65:23, 1995).

4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

## GLOSSY IBIS IN FREMONT COUNTY

THOMAS H. KENT, JAMES L. FULLER, AND A. RICHARD TETRAULT

At 1:30 p.m. on 18 May 1995, we were birding the east-west dike at the north end of Riverton Area in Fremont County when we noticed three large dark birds flying from the south. At first we thought that they were cormorants, but soon we saw the long, decurved bills typical of ibises. They flew directly over our heads at about 50 feet. We could not detect any white around the eye. They circled for some time as they flew off to the northwest. We followed them with binoculars and telescope as they seemed to be leaving the area, but they came back and disappeared behind trees on the west side of the West Nishnabotna River.



With the aid of a county map and after 9 miles of driving, we relocated the three ibises feeding along the edge of a shallow pond. We approached the birds so that they were to the northeast and later directly east of us at about 80 yards. We were able to study them with the telescope and later take photos with a 1500 mm mirror lens.

We identified two birds as Glossy Ibis and one as White-faced Ibis. They were large, dark, long-legged birds with long, thick, strongly decurved bills. The two glossies tended to stay together and slightly apart from the white-faced. The glossies were noticeably larger, perhaps 10 to 15 percent. All three birds had chestnut-colored necks and body and iridescent green backs and wings. There was no evidence of retained brownish feathers that might be expected on an immature bird. The white-faced had white feathering all the way around the red eyes. The glossies had thin blue lines (facial skin) above and below the eye. These lines did not extend back of the eye or around the chin. The eyes were dark without any hint of red. The lower line was thinner and neither was half as wide as the white feathering on the white-faced. The white-faced had bright carmine legs; the legs of the glossies were dark gray without any red color at the joints. The bills of the glossies were dull gray throughout; the bill of the white-face was somewhat lighter proximally and appeared pink-tinged in direct sunlight. The birds fed in shallow water and at times rested or preened.

On the 19 May we found two ibises on the north side of J46 west of the town of Riverton on the west side of the West Nishnabotna. One was a white-faced and the other a glossy. They appeared the same as the birds seen the day before except that the white feathering around the eye of the white-faced was slightly less prominent.

We visited with B. J. Rose about 8:30 p.m. on the 18th, and he indicated that there were two glossies and two white-faced present at the pond later in the afternoon of the 18th. Only one of the white-faced was smaller than the glossier. These findings were confirmed in a written description by Babs and Loren Padelford. Ross Silcock documented one of the Glossy Ibises on 22 May.

94-39





Little Gull P-0432  
Big Creek L., Polk Co., IA  
14 Nov 1994 Steve Dinsmore

94-39

0003 19:01 AM 11-14-94 265

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0003 19:01 AM 11-14-94 265

94-39

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Little Gull (Larus minutus)

Number: 1 adult

Location: Big Creek Lake

Habitat: large reservoir

Date: 14 November 1994 (present through 19 November)

Time: 10:52-1:08 p.m. and 4:20-4:44 p.m. on 11/14

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

Others who saw bird: James J. Dinsmore, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): I was scanning the large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls feeding over the lake when I noticed a slightly smaller gull with rounded wings and black undersides to the flight feathers. I immediately recognized the bird as an adult Little Gull, a species I am familiar with from recent birding in North Carolina. The bird actively foraged until 1:00 p.m., when it landed on the water with a flock of sleeping Bonaparte's Gulls. The bird was again foraging actively late in the afternoon when it was relocated.

Compared directly to a Bonaparte's, this bird was roughly 10-15% smaller. Size differences were most noticeable when the bird was resting on the water. The wings were much more rounded at the tips, and the bird flew with noticeably faster and deeper wingbeats. The wing pattern was the most striking feature of the bird. The upperwings were entirely pale gray, with a narrow white border along the trailing edge of the wing (i.e. white tips to each of the flight feathers). The undersides of the flight feathers were black, except for a narrow white trailing edge. The axillars were paler and seemed grayish (not pure white). The tail was white and square-tipped. The uppertail contrasted with the slightly darker gray mantle and upperwings. The underparts were entirely white. The head was white with a dark gray cap, visible both in flight and when the bird perched on the water. There was an obvious dark spot behind the eye, similar to that of a Bonaparte's Gull. The head seemed small and dove-like, accentuated by the proportionately large eye (as compared to a Bonaparte's). The legs were bright red. The bill was black, and slightly shorter than that of a Bonaparte's. Based on the wing pattern, I aged the bird as an adult in basic plumage (probably third-basic, since birds in second-basic plumage usually show some black on the upper surface of the primaries).

Similar species  
gulls. The black underwings eliminated all other gulls except Ross', which has a smaller bill and an obvious wedge-shaped tail.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with sun behind me and mostly clear skies. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 15 meters. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen two other Little Gulls in Iowa, as well as over 100 in North Carolina in the past year.

References consulted: Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written during initial observation

How long before this form completed: completed 8:00 p.m. on 14 November 1994



94-39

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Little Gull How many? one  
Location? Big Creek Lake, Polk County  
Type of habitat? freshwater lake  
When? date(s): 14 November 1994 Time: . 4:30-4:45 p.m.  
Who? your name and address Jim Dinsmore  
4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014  
Others with you Steve Dinsmore  
Others before and after you Steve Dinsmore

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.

Bird was flying over lake and then landed on lake.  
Was with hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls. In direct comparison with a Bonaparte's Gull, this bird was about 10% smaller than the Bonaparte's  
In flight, could see wings, tail, and general color.  
Upper wings basically light gray in color; could make out a light border along the trailing edge of wing and distinct white markings at tip of wings. No black on upper surface of wing.  
Lower surface appeared largely black giving a distinct contrast to upper surface, esp. when bird swerved and turned. There was a fairly distinct light area along the trailing edge of wing and some white at tip of wing.  
Tail appeared to be all light colored. Did not really notice underside other than that it appeared largely white in color.  
On the water, could see head well. Top of head had a distinct dark cap and a somewhat fainter dark smudge behind the eye, (not like the distinct spot of black found on Bonaparte's Gull-direct comparison). Also noted that the bill appeared somewhat shorter and stubbier than bill of Bonaparte's Gull.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Lacked the distinct white wing pattern found on other small gulls like Bonaparte's, Black-legged Kittiwake, etc. The distinct black on the underside of the wings is distinctive for this species.

94-39

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

If yes, explain:

no

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: light was behind us although getting close to sundown  
20-45 spotting scope used to see bird in flight and on water  
bird variously about 200-400 yards away

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

Limited-have seen one Little Gull before but had numerous Bonaparte's Gulls to compare with in the field.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Looked at Robbins and National Geographic guides after I viewed the bird in the field. Looked at Grant-Gull book several hours later

How long before field notes made? notes taken in field immediately after watching bird

this form completed? filled out next day

Mail original form to field editor for this season.



94-39

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

*Species:* Little Gull; *Number:* 1 adult, basic plumage

*Location:* Big Creek State Park, Polk Co., IA

*Date:* 15 November 1994; *Time:* 8:15 to 9:15 a.m.

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

*Others before/with/after:* Found by Steve Dinsmore. Present were Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Tim Schantz, Dick Tetrault, and Hank Zaletel.

*Habitat and circumstances:* large artificial lake.

*Description of bird:* When we arrived others had the bird in their scopes as it was flying over the lake with many Bonaparte's Gull. It appeared to have slightly shorter and more rounded wings than Bonaparte's, but the most obvious mark was the black underwing. There was a white trailing edge to the underwing which was wider and more prominent at the tip. The inner greater wing coverts were not as solid black as the rest of the underwing. The upper wing was very uniform light gray. The body and tail were white. The back of the head was smudged gray with a dark post-auricular mark. The bill was small and dark. The bird was in the air about half the time that we were there. I could not pick it out when it was on the water.

*Voice:* not heard.

*Similar species:* The wing pattern easily separates this bird from the two similar species: Bonaparte's and Common Black-headed gulls. The duskiess to the back of the head, which I was able to pick out on a couple of occasions, was also helpful.

*Any one have reservations?:* no

*Light:* We were looking west with mostly clear sky and early morning light; *Distance:* 100-200 yards (est);

*Optics:* 10x binocular, 20x scope.

*Previous experience:* I have seen on first-year bird in Colorado.

*References before/after viewing:* Looked at National Geographic Guide before and after viewing.

*Time of notes:* 1 hour; *Final typing:* 2 days

**DOCUMENTATION FORM  
UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS IN IOWA**

**Species:** Little Gull (adult basic)

**Location:** Big Creek State Park, Polk Co., IA

**Habitat:** Man-made lake; open water

**Date:** 16 November, 1994 **Time:** 15:55 to 16:15

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

**Other Observers:** Bob Myers; many other observers before

**Description of bird:** This gull was feeding with a large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls and in flight looked very similar. It had a pale gray mantle, with the color deepening a bit toward the primaries. It was differentiated from the Bonaparte's by the lack of a white wedge at the leading edge of the wing. The tail was white and rounded. As it flew the nearly black underwing, trimmed neatly in white, was readily apparent and contrasted with the Bonaparte's. The wings were also more rounded. Flight pattern was a bit different but a bit difficult to describe -- perhaps more fluttery. Perhaps because of the rounded wings, it looked more like a butterfly among the swallows.

As the bird sat on the water, I could plainly see the gray cap on the top of the head. The cap, in fact, was instrumental in relocating the bird as the head was not such an obvious stark white as the Bonaparte's. The cap was not well seen while the bird was in flight. The bird had a tiny black bill, black eye, and small auricular spot approximately the same size as the eye -- a contrast to the more crescent shape of the Bonaparte's spot. When floating directly beside a Bonaparte's, the bird appeared 15 - 20% smaller, a characteristic not discernible when it was in flight. Other than the cap, the head, breast and belly appeared white. The bird scratched once and its legs and feet looked red. I'm not sure if it was an illusion created by the gray cap, but the posture of the bird on the water looked flatter than the Bonaparte's. The posture accentuated the small size.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** No other gull would appear significantly smaller than a Bonaparte's. Dark underwing readily differentiated it from the numerous Bonaparte's.

**Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics):** The bird was observed in good light (sun behind) at a guesstimated 150 yards through a zoom scope set at 20X - 45X.

**Previous experience:** First adult basic plumage bird. Adult alternate observed at length a year ago in Churchill, Manitoba.

**References consulted during observation:** None

**References consulted before completing documentation:** None

**Field notes made:** Immediately after observation

**Documentation completed:** One day later



## DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

94-39

SPECIES: Little Gull (Adult in winter plumage) 1994

LOCATION: Big Creek State Park (Polk County)

DATE &amp; TIME: 16 November (7:40-8:45 AM) and 17 November (1:35-2:15 PM)

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

OTHERS: Discovered by Steve Dinsmore, who was also present on 17 Nov. Present on 16 Nov. were Fred Brink, Beth and Mark Proescholdt, Jane Clark, Ann Johnson, and Phil Walsh.

BACKGROUND: This bird was reported to the Iowa Birdline as discovered by Steve Dinsmore on 14 November at this location. I was there early the morning of 16 November, and after about 45 minutes, the bird was seen flying (and later sitting on the lake surface) across the lake a distance of about 400 yards. The following day in the afternoon, the bird was farther south on the lake, and was viewed often at distances of 25-100 yards.

DESCRIPTION: The bird was generally smaller than Bonaparte's Gull, an estimated 15-20%, both when flying and sitting. The head and bill were also noticeably smaller. It looked very much like a winter-plumaged Bonaparte's, except that (1) the underwing was entirely dark, with a wide white trailing edge. (From very close range, it could be seen that the underwing was not black, rather a dark gray, and that in the axillary areas, it was considerably lighter gray.) (2) It had a subtle gray cap (3) The dark spot behind the eye was not as dark (4) The upperwing was entirely pale gray (5) In flight, the wing appeared to be shorter and the end rounder. (6) Its flight was more fluttery and it seemed more maneuverable. Otherwise, the underparts were entirely white, as was the very slightly rounded tail, and the legs were a pinkish color. Vocalization: It was heard to give a single note call that sounded like "week".

SIMILAR SPECIES: Comparisons to Bonaparte's Gull made in description. No other small gull has a dark underwing.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: On 16 November, the early morning was sunny, and I was looking west and southwest with KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X) at distances from 250-400 yards. On 17 November, it was early to mid afternoon on a partly cloudy day, and viewing was with both KOWA TSN-4 and Swift Audubon binoculars (8.5 X 44) mostly looking toward the west and northwest at distances from 25-100 yards. It was flying and feeding the entire time, and sat on the water for only brief periods.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I had seen 4 adults in breeding plumage at Manitowoc, Wisconsin in July, 1988.

FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Field notes were made immediately on both days, and National Geographic and Harrison's Seabird guides had been consulted the previous evening. This form was typed on November 23.



What species? Little Gull How many? 1 adultLocation? Big Creek S.P. beach area - (Polk Co.)Type of habitat? Good-sized lakeWhen? date(s): Nov. 16, 1994 time: 7:50 a.m. to 9:10 a.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdt, Jim Fuller, Ann Johnson, Fred Brink, Phil Walsh, Jane Clarkothers before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Pam + Reid Allen, Tim Schantz, Tom Kent, 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.

Blackish underwings were very noticeable in flight even at a distance. It had rounded wings at the wingtips, light gray upperwings with white trailing edge showing, and white around the rounded wing tips. I saw reddish legs once. It had a small black bill, an all white tail, a white breast and underbody color, and a very light gray color to the back. It had a grayish cap on its head and a little gray seemed to come down barely onto its breast. When it was on the water, white wing tips showed contrasting with black wingtips of the Bonaparte's Gulls with it, it was noticeably smaller than Bonaparte's Gulls with it on the water and also in flight. Flew often with a quick fluttery wingbeat and faster than Bonaparte's Gulls. It flew quite a lot, and <sup>we</sup> also watched the gull quite a bit perched on the water. Great looks!

Similar species and how eliminated: A Bonaparte's Gull lacks the blackish underwings and have a white wedge area at primaries. Other gulls are too big and do not have the blackish underwings.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain: : :

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Mostly sunny with sun behind us or to our sides. 200 yards away to 50 yards estimated. 8X30 Binocs, 22x Scope, KOWA 20x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen one before - an adult at Churchill.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Birds of N. America guide

How long before field notes made? about 9:35 a.m. this form completed? NOV. 18, 1994  
right after viewing



What species? Little Gull How many? 1Location? Big Creek S.P., Polk CountyType of habitat? an artificial lake, moderate sizeWhen? date(s): Nov. 16, 1994 time: 7:45 to 9:10Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Mark Proescholdt, Jim Fuller, Fred Brink, Ann Johnson, Jane ~~Fuller~~, Phil Walsh, Clarkothers before or after you: M.O.B.

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.

Many Bonaparte's Gulls were flying + on the water. Suddenly Phil Walsh said, "I have it", + it was flying showing distinct black underwings with wide white trailing edges. Its flight was different from the many Bonaparte's - more fluttery and faster, showing its shorter + rounded wings. Topside was a uniform gray with no white wedges as Bonaparte's, but with the white trailing edge. It was noticeably smaller than Bonaparte's - a really small gull. When on the water with head tucked in a smudgy dark cap showed on its white head, as well as a black short bill + black eye. It was too far away to see dark spot behind eye, nor did I see its red leg as it stretched. A nice Little Gull!

Similar species and how eliminated: Bonaparte's Gulls are most similar, See above

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain: :

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

Sunny skies, sun behind us, 60-200 yards estimated, 8x30 Nikon binocs, 22 power Bushnell scope, good visibility

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Little Gull was a life bird, but I've seen many Bonaparte's

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Field guides studied of course, + talking with other observers.

How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? Nov. 17, 1994

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Sightings in Iowa

94-39

What Species? Little Gull

How Many? 1

Location? Big Creek State Park Polk Co.

Type of Habitat? Open water

When? date(s): 11-17 1994

Time: 8:30am to 11:30am

Others with you: Dennis Thompson

Circumstance? Located 3 or 4 times during the three hours I was there.

Description: The adult winter plumaged Little Gull was somewhat hard to pick out of the 300 to 400 Bonaparte's Gulls present, but once located was very easy to track and identify. The most prominent feature was the pure black under wings. The Little gull had a white tailing edge to the wing both above and below. The wings were round compared to the many Bonaparte's present. The bird was also smaller in size than the Bonaparte's, but this was not obvious like I thought it would be. The head had a black spot behind the eye and a dark smudged crown which was definitely present but hard to see.

Similar species: Black under wing is diagnostic.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

Viewing conditions: Good light at 150yds to 400 yds with a Kowa spotting scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: very familiar with Bonaparte's. Common Black-headed seen same day.

References: National Geographic during sighting.

How long before field notes made? on sight

This form completed? 2 wks

R. Ammons?



94.39

**DOCUMENTATION FORM**

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

**What Species?** Little Gull

**How many?** 1

**Location?** Big Creek State Park, Polk Co.

**Type of Habitat?** Lake

**When?** November 20, 1994, many times between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM

**Who?** Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317

**Others with you:** Chris Caster, Carol Thompson, Jim Sandrock

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

Slightly smaller than nearby Bonaparte's Gulls; typical gull shape; bill black and slender; head, neck, breast, belly, and tail white; black spot behind the eye; gray "cap" on rear of crown; upperwings light gray with white trailing edge; underwings blackish with white trailing edge; primary tips on sitting bird white.

The bird was observed sitting on the lake and flying over the lake feeding in the company of several hundred Bonaparte's Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls. No vocalizations could be attributed to the Little Gull.

**Similar species; how eliminated:** Small size, dark underwings and gray cap eliminate all other gulls.

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

**Viewing conditions:** Overcast, windy, light rain; estimated distance varied from 50-200 yards; viewed with 15x-45x telescope and 8x40 binoculars.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** No previous experience with Little Gull; very familiar with Bonaparte's Gull.

**References and persons consulted before writing description:** None

**How long before field notes made?** 15 minutes

**How long before this form completed?** 4 hours