

Little Gull

21 Apr 1996

Black Hawk L., Sac Co., IA

*Peter Ernzen, *Jim Fuller

also 22 Apr; IBL 66:104, 67:82, Ernzen 1996

Record Number: 96-18

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Peter Ernzen (21 April), 407 Court, Ida Grove 41445 [4/6/97]

Jim Fuller (22 April), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:104

Records Committee: IBL 67:82

Ernzen, P. 1966. Little Gull in Sac County. IBL 66:139-140.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Hooded gull, rounded wings, dark underwing, red feet all diagnostic characteristics of Little Gull.

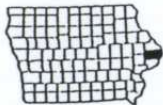
A-D, Despite discrepancy in description of mantle color relative to Bonaparte's, both descriptions adequate for ID as Little Gull.

96-18

SABINE'S GULL AT CLINTON

PETER C. PETERSEN

On 22 October 1995, Dennis Carter, Mary Lou, and I were birding at Lock and Dam 13 on the north edge of Clinton. The lock access is from Illinois, and the lock lies about 1 mile from the Iowa shoreline and about 1.5 miles from the Illinois shoreline. In mid-morning, we observed a small gull flying over the channel just upstream from the lock. It was much smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls which were common in the area. It displayed the classic "W" pattern with the six outer primaries and their coverts black, the remaining primaries and the secondaries white to the carpal joint, and most of the secondary coverts grayish-brown. The tail was notched white with a black subterminal band. The head was whitish with a brownish smudge behind the eye and on top of the head; the bill appeared entirely black. Its flight was very light for a gull. The closest observation was from about 80 m, and the bird was in flight for the entire observation. The sky was clear, and the sun behind us. After about two minutes, the bird flew behind a barge coming into the locks toward the Iowa shore and was not seen again. This is the first report of this species from Clinton County.

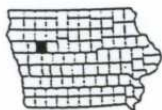


235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803

LITTLE GULL IN SAC COUNTY

PETER ERNZEN

On the morning of 21 April 1996 I was driving by the southeastern corner of Black Hawk Lake in Sac County when I noticed a small flock of Bonaparte's Gulls. As has been my habit for the last three years, I stopped to look them over for anything unusual. Almost immediately, a small, hooded gull caught my attention. The following observations were made over a 23-minute period from an estimated 30-100 feet.



The bird was small, an estimated 20 percent smaller than Bonaparte's Gull, with a light gray mantle, rounded wings, stocky appearance. The undersides of the wings were a dark gray/black in color with a white trailing edge to the wings. The contrast between the light gray top and dark underwing was prominent.

The head appeared to be smaller than that of a Bonaparte's Gull and possessed a hood with no eye ring. The bill was black, and the feet were dark red. The bird sometimes hovered over the water and moved its feet giving the appearance of running in place. Occasionally in this position the bird dipped its bill into the water.

The other five black-hooded gulls seen in Iowa were eliminated for a variety of reasons. Franklin's and Laughing gulls are larger and darker mantled with a prominent eye ring. Sabine's Gull has a bicolored bill, forked tail, and a different wing pattern. Bonaparte's Gull is slightly darker mantled and larger, with more angular looking wings and a white leading edge to the wings. The Black-headed Gull looks like a bigger version of the Bonaparte's Gull with a dark brown hood and red bill.

After I returned home, I made several phone calls and returned in the late afternoon to search for the bird again. Though I was unable to relocate the bird, Jim Fuller

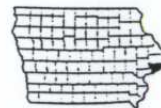
found the bird the next day. This is the fifth record of this European species for Iowa, with three fall records and two spring records.

407 Court, Ida Grove, IA 51445

LAUGHING GULL IN SCOTT COUNTY

PETER C. PETERSEN

On the afternoon of 30 September 1995, I received a call from Dan Dorrance that he had just seen a first winter plumage Laughing Gull at Hampton, Illinois, below Lock 14 on the Mississippi River. Just after 5:00 p.m., Mary Lou and I drove to Hampton but located nothing but Ring-billed Gulls. I scoped the Iowa shore and found a group of gulls on a rock and sand bar at the mouth of Spencer Creek at the east edge of Pleasant Valley, Iowa. One bird was smaller and had a dark grayish hind crown. We quickly crossed the interstate 80 bridge and drove to a lane next to the mouth of Spencer Creek. We walked to within about 75 m. of the birds and viewed them with a Kowa scope at about 30 power for about five minutes from 6:00 p.m. One gull was slightly smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls. It had a heavy pointed black bill and gray-brown smudge on the hind crown. In size it was just smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls. The mantle was gray and the primaries black with no white tips. The legs were black and the tail ended in a black band. The sky was overcast, and a strong rain cell was just west of us. The birds flew as the wind from the rain cell reached us and we noted black secondaries with a white rear edge and brownish coverts. The tail band was complete with no white edge. We used 10 x 40 and 7 x 35 binoculars to observe the birds in flight. They all flew west to the usual night roost between Bettendorf and Moline. On 2 October I had a chance to check the night roost early in the morning but found only Ring-billed and Franklin gulls present. This is the first report of a Laughing Gull in Scott County.



235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803

I.O.U. BUSINESS SPRING BUSINESS MEETING

Carol Thompson, presiding, Mary Kuhlman, secretary
Burlington, 18 May 1996, 3:20-4:35 p.m.

On behalf of the I.O.U., Thompson thanked Chuck Fuller for his work on local arrangements for the meeting.

It was moved (Gode, seconded by Zaletel) that the minutes of the fall business meeting be approved. Motion carried.

The treasurer's report for 1995 was distributed. It showed an excess of support and revenues over expenses of \$3,745.88.

Committee Reports

Records: Tom Kent reported that a new official list of Iowa birds will be published this year. Jim Fuller is now a member of this committee through 2002.

Membership: Beth Brown reported that she is attempting to get the Iowa Birdline on public radio. There are two vacancies on this committee; the board will act on them after the business meeting. The I.O.U. display was shown. This committee is in charge of the display.

Peter Ernzen
407 Court
Ida Grove IA 51445

96-18

On the morning of April 21 1996 at 10:15 am, I was looking over a group of small gulls - Bonaparte's - at the south east corner of Blackhawk Lake in Sac Co., when I saw a gull that was different than the Bonaparte's it associated with. After viewing the bird for a considerable time from close distance, I concluded that this bird was an adult Little Gull. The following description is from my original notes.

Small, light gray mantled gull with a black hood. Mantle of the gull was lighter than that of associated Bonaparte's. In flight the bird appeared to be about 20 percent smaller than the Bonaparte's Gull. The wings appeared to be rounded as opposed to the sharp angular wings of the Bonaparte's. The rounded wings gave it a stocky appearance. The wings also had a white trailing edge. The wings were the first clue that I was looking at something other than a Bonaparte's Gull. The underside of the wings were a dark gray to black in color, with the contrast between the top and bottom of the wing being very prominent in the flying bird.

The head appeared to be smaller, the hood was black, with no eye ring, the bill appeared black. The feet were a bright red and were prominent when the bird hovered over the water. While hovering, the bird moved its feet in such a way as to give it the appearance of running in place. While engaged in this activity the bird would occasionally dip its bill into the water.

The other five hooded gulls were eliminated for a variety of reasons. Franklin's and Laughing Gull would be larger, darker mantled and have a prominent eye ring. Sabine's Gull would've had a bicolored bill, forked tail and different - white triangular - pattern to its wings. The larger Common Black-headed Gull looks like a larger version of a Bonaparte's Gull with a brownish hood and a red bill. The associated Bonaparte's Gulls were darker mantled and larger. The wings were more angular in appearance with a white leading edge and black wing tips. I have observed all but the Laughing Gull - though the Sabine's Gulls were immature, the distinctive wing pattern is present in both adults and immatures - and feel confident in calling this an adult Little Gull.

I observed the bird in flight and while sitting, from an estimated 30 - 100 feet. I left the bird at 10:30 am, in order to make several calls. I returned to watch the bird from 11:00 to 11:08 am. To the best of my knowledge Jim Fuller is the only other person to have seen the gull (personal communication). Jim saw the gull on April 22.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Little Gull (Adult)

LOCATION: Black Hawk Lake (Sac County)

DATE & TIME: 22 April, 1996 (8:40-910 AM)

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

OTHERS: Reported by Pete Ernzen

BACKGROUND: Pete Ernzen reported a Little Gull to the Iowa Birdline on 21 April. He described it as being with several hundred Bonaparte's Gulls on the southeast corner of the lake. When I arrived early the next morning, I could not locate but three Bonaparte's Gulls sitting on the dredge spoil pond. I drove almost around the lake when I found about twenty Bonaparte's type gulls and about the same number of Ring-billed Gulls floating in a group about 200 yards off the northeast corner of the lake. Shortly after I started looking at these birds, all but two of the Bonaparte's, and all but six of the Ring-billed Gulls got up and flew away. However, one of the two remaining Bonaparte's was noticeably smaller, and I watched it as it drifted closer with the northwest wind. Soon, five more Bonaparte's and about ten Ring-billed Gulls settled back in. Direct comparisons of the smaller bird could be made to the Bonaparte's. At one point, all the gulls flew forward about twenty yards and landed back on the water. That was the only occasion on which the underside of the bird's wing could be seen.

DESCRIPTION: The small gull appeared to be only about half the size of the Ring-billeds, and about three-quarters the size of the Bonaparte's. As I watched in the scope, the birds eventually came within seventy-five yards. The smaller bird had a complete black hood which ran almost straight across the neck, while the Bonaparte's hood angled toward the top of the head, leaving the nape white. Otherwise, the mantle and wings were a light grey, and it seemed to be very slightly darker than the Bonaparte's (at least I could always pick out the smaller bird by mantle color with binoculars). The underparts were entirely white. From what I could see of the tail, it was white. The eye appeared to be dark as did the very small bill. When the bird flew forward, I had a chance to observe the underwing, and it was black. I never saw the legs.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The small size, as compared to Bonaparte's Gulls, the complete dark hood, and the black underwing separate this gull from any other small gull.

VIEWING CONDITIONS & OPTICS: I watched most of the time with a KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20 X 60 zoom). At times I used Swift Audubon (8.5 X 44) binoculars. It was early morning on a partly cloudy and rather windy day. I was looking toward the west.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: I made field notes as I watched. I also looked at National Geographic field guide as I viewed the birds. This form was typed on 28 April.