

Laughing Gull
8 Jul 1994

Record Number: 94-24
Classification: A-D

Keokuk, Lee Co., IA

*Stephen J. Dinsmore
to 9 Jul; IBL 64:110; 65:81, Dinsmore 1997

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [3 Nov 1994]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:110

Records Committee: IBL 65:81

Dinsmore, S. J. 1997. Laughing Gull at Keokuk. IBL 67:27-28.

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 no vote recorded

A-D, Long wings, bill, and legs, in combination with white crown and gray wash across nape, sufficiently distinguish this bird from Franklin's Gull. Proximity to Ring-billed helpful in assessing structural features.

A-D, An interesting bird. Agree with analysis by Dinsmore.

no vote recorded, Excellent description of Laughing Gull. Tail length relative to tail [sic] important field mark for this species.

- Fox Sparrow:** First: 23 Sep at Diamond L. (MPr). High count: 24 on 26 Oct at Saylorville Res. (SJD).
- Lincoln's Sparrow:** First: 3 on 14 Sep at Moorehead P. (PE). Last: 1 on 10 Nov in Appanoose Co. (RLC). High count: 20 on 20 Oct in Appanoose Co. (RLC).
- White-throated Sparrow:** First: 23 Sep at Diamond L. (MPr).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** First: 28 Sep at Mason City (CJF).
- Harris's Sparrow:** First: 29 Sep at Grammer Grove W.A. (MPr). High count: 20 on 10 Nov in Appanoose Co. (RLC).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** First: 2 Oct at Sioux Center (JV).
- Lapland Longspur:** First: several flocks of 400 on 10 Oct in Clay and Palo Alto counties (RR). High count: 5,000 on 9 Nov at Bays Branch W.A. (SJD). Large flocks were seen in north-central and northwestern Iowa from 28 Oct to 17 Nov.
- Smith's Longspur:** A report will be referred to the Records Committee.
- Snow Bunting:** First: 2 on 2 Nov at Barringer Sl. in Clay Co. (SJD). High count: 170 on 21 Nov in Osceola Co. (SJD). Many were reported with most in northern Iowa, but 3 were at Rathbun Res. by 10 Nov (TNJ).
- Bobolink:** Last: 2 on 4 Oct at Harrier M. (SJD, JJD).
- Eastern Meadowlark:** Last: 2 were heard in Appanoose Co. on 6 Oct (RLC).
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Last: 1 female on 22 Sep in Boone Co. (SJD).
- Rusty Blackbird:** First: 3 on 5 Oct at Union Slough N.W.R. (MCK).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** There were four reports with varying amount of detail, including three that would be record early dates. This species is often difficult to identify and hard to describe. The one documented report will be referred to the Records Committee.
- Great-tailed Grackle:** Last: 3 Nov at Red Rock Res. (AMJ). Reports of 1 to 25 birds were from the following counties: Boone, Clay, Fremont, Greene, Marion, Monona, and Pottawattamie.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** A flock of 6,000 on 6 Oct at Dunbar Sl. contained no Shiny Cowbirds (SJD).
- Orchard Oriole:** All: a second-year male was seen in Cass Co. on 3 Aug (MAP).
- Baltimore Oriole:** A immature male was at Dick and Nancy Lynch's feeder in Iowa City from mid-November though 30 Nov (JLF, THK, SJD).
- Purple Finch:** First: 10 Oct near Spirit Lake (ETh). Only a few were reported with most in November.
- Red Crossbill:** The July invasion continued into August with 6 immatures at Shenandoah on the 4th (MT), 2 at Indianola on the 7th (Daryl Howell fide JJD), 2 immatures from the 7th to 12th near Spirit Lake (ETh), 10 to the 10th at Algona (MCK), and 3 on the 19th at Iowa City (Cherry Sparks fide THK). Later fall birds included 9 on 26 Oct at Big Creek L. (SJD), 1 on 30 Oct at Grammer Grove W.A. (MPr), 12 on 3 Nov in Ames (JJD), and 2 on 25 Nov near Spirit Lake (ETh).
- Pine Siskin:** First: 4 Sep at Saylorville Res. (SJD). Only a few were reported in October and November.
- American Goldfinch:** Subjectively, numbers seemed to be increased, but 650 on 2 Nov in Appanoose Co. (RLC) is an extraordinary number.
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** This species was found south of Muscatine in Muscatine Co., north of Oakville in Louisa Co., and north of Burlington in Des Moines Co. on 22 Nov and southwest of Fort Madison in Lee Co. on 24 Nov (THK, RLC), suggesting that it is now established in the four most southerly counties that border the Mississippi River.



Baltimore Oriole. Iowa City, Johnson Co., 21 Nov 1996. Photo by T. H. Kent

COMMENT

The database comprised 36 reports and 60 documentations (of 31 species). I made 1,461 entries into a computer database. Although more species were documented than last year, there were fewer documentations. This may be due in part to the fact that a number of rare birds were seen briefly and were not relocated by others. Most of the rarities were well documented. There were a number of excellent documentations for record early and late birds. However, lack of or sketchy details on not-so-rare birds

(e.g., Thayer's Gull, Brewer's Blackbird) that are unusually early or late provide the most frustration in decision making to me.

I thank contributors for getting their reports to me in a timely fashion. Several contributors indicated that they had checked their dates for errors. Welcome to Aaron Brees and Russell Reisz, and thanks to Eva Wiedemeyer for the Ovenbird report.

CONTRIBUTORS * = DOCUMENTATION ONLY

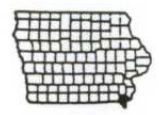
Pam H. Allen (PHA), West Des Moines; Reid I. Allen (RIA), West Des Moines; Aaron Brees (AB), Corydon; Dennis Carter (DeC), Decorah; *Robert I. Cecil (RIC), Des Moines; Raymond L. Cummins (RLC), Centerville; David L. Dankert (DL), Cedar Rapids; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Ames; Chris Edwards (CE), North Liberty; Peter Ernzen (PE), Ida Grove; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; *Jacob T. Gilliam (JTG), Norwalk; Rita Goranson (RGo), Mason City; Douglas C. Harr (DCH), Larchwood; Dennis Henrickson (DHe), Estherville; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City, NE; Ann M. Johnson (AMJ), Norwalk; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Paul Martsching (PM), Ames; Babs K. Padelford (BKP), Bellevue, NE; Loren J. Padelford (LJP), Bellevue, NE; Marietta A. Petersen (MAP), Walnut; Peter C. Petersen (PCP), Davenport; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt (MPr), Liscomb; Russell Reisz (RR), Missouri Valley; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; Ed Thelen (ETh), Spirit Lake; Dennis Thompson (DT), Johnston; Marie Tiemann (MT), Shenandoah; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; Phil J. Walsh (PJW), Des Moines; Eva B. Wiedemeyer (EBW), Carroll; and Hank Zaletel (HZ), Nevada.

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LAUGHING GULL AT KEOKUK

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 8 July 1994 I saw a Laughing Gull above Lock and Dam 19 at Keokuk in Lee County. I was looking at some gulls resting on a log just above the lock when I noticed a smaller, slimmer gull with a dark gray mantle which I immediately recognized as a Laughing Gull. The log was barely on the



Iowa side of the river, although the Laughing Gull made several short flights which clearly carried it into Iowa. I studied the bird from 4:05-4:30 p.m. and saw it again on the morning of 9 July. The bird was slightly smaller and much slimmer than a Ring-billed Gull. The bill and legs were black. The bill was nearly as long as that of a Ring-billed Gull with a slight bulge at the tip. The legs were as long as those of a nearby Ring-billed Gull. The forehead and crown were white with a grayish wash across the nape, most pronounced in the auricular. The underparts were white except for darker gray wash on the flanks and shoulders. The mantle and upperwing were dark gray, slightly darker than those of a Ring-billed Gull. The outer primaries were black, lacking the white tips of an adult bird. In flight, at least the outermost five primaries were black; the inner primaries were dark gray and the same color as the secondaries, secondary coverts, and mantle. The undersides of the outer primaries were black. The tail was white with a narrow, broken, black subterminal band (the central

and outermost tail feathers were white). The lack of a hood, lack of brown color on the body or wings, and broken tail band were used to age the bird as second-year. Grant (*Gulls: A Guide to Identification*, Buteo Books, 1986) indicates that most second-summer birds "acquire full hood as adult summer". This bird resembled a second-winter bird (especially the bird in photo 158 on p. 238 of Grant) because of the wing pattern and lack of a hood. Grant (1986) indicates that birds may acquire second-winter plumage as early as June and July. I believe the bird may have been molting from first-summer to second-winter plumage. This is about the twelfth record of a Laughing Gull in Iowa and continues the recent increase in records of this species in Iowa.

4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 9 December 1995, I was scanning a large flock of Common Goldeneye off Whitebreast Point on the south side of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. I soon noted a different goldeneye which I thought to be a male Barrow's. I watched the bird intermittently from 11:35 a.m. to 1:10 p.m. Compared to nearby Common Goldeneyes, this bird had a jet black mantle, a thin dark mark extending forward from the shoulder, and a white facial spot that was shaped differently. The head mostly appeared black, but had a purplish sheen under some light conditions. The head shape was distinctive: a very steep, flat forehead, gradually sloping to the rear and creating a peaked-crown effect. The dark bill was shorter than the bill of a Common Goldeneye. The mantle and wings were jet black with a line of white spots on the scapulars extending forward to the shoulder. The bird had a long, slender, crescent-shaped white mark on the face, in front of the eye. This mark was not as crisp as I would have expected at this date, and I initially thought the bird was a first-fall male. However, consultation with Bellrose (*Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*, Stackpole Books, 1976) revealed that this bird was certainly an adult male, probably at the very end of the molt to alternate plumage. All other plumage characters were those of an adult male. This is the sixth record of a Barrow's Goldeneye in Iowa.

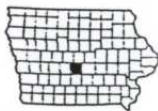


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A FALL WHIMBREL IN POLK COUNTY

JIM SINCLAIR AND STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 27 August 1995, we were birding the islands at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The exposed mudflats and short-grass habitat had attracted numerous shorebirds, including more than 40 Buff-breasted Sandpipers. At approximately 8:30 a.m., Sinclair saw a large shorebird alight in a shallow depression on one of the islands. Both of us focused on the bird and quickly identified it as a Whimbrel. The bird was crow-sized and brown overall with pale spots on the wings and mantle. The bill was twice the length of the head



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and strongly decurved. However, the bill seemed shorter than that of most of the Whimbrels we had seen previously. The bill was mostly dark with a prominent area of pale pink color at the base, mostly restricted to the lower mandible. The head pattern was striking: pale central crown stripe, dark line through the eye, and a white line above the eye. The underparts were also mottled brown. After several minutes, the bird flew south and out of sight over the lake. In flight, we could see that the wings and wing linings were dark. When it flew, the bird gave a long series of single, loud, whistled notes which we immediately recognized as belonging to this species. Because of the shortness of the bill and the extensive pink color, we concluded the bird was a juvenile.

Whimbrels are rare migrants in Iowa. There are about 27 records of this species in Iowa, all but four of them from spring (22 April-27 May with a peak from 15-25 May). The only summer record is 1 on 26 June 1988 at Algona (*IBL* 58:109). Other fall records are of single birds: 14 September 1952 at Black Hawk Lake (Dinsmore et al. 1984), 1-2 August 1987 at Riverton Wildlife Area (*IBL* 58:19), and 3 September 1987 in northern Polk County (*IBL* 58:19). Although this species is clearly more likely to occur in spring, at least a few birds probably pass through Iowa in fall.

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BARROW'S GOLDENEYE IN LEE COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 18 December 1995 I saw an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye with a group of several thousand Common Goldeneyes on Pool 19 of the Mississippi River off Montrose, Lee County. I studied and photographed the bird from 9:20 to 10:30 a.m. at distances as close as 150 m. I was looking at a small group of Common Goldeneyes close to shore when I found a "different" male goldeneye which was easily recognizable as a male Barrow's. Compared to a male Common Goldeneye, this bird was darker-backed, had a smaller bill, a different head shape, and had black color extending forward from the shoulder. The bill was dark and was slightly shorter and slimmer at the base than the bill of a Common Goldeneye. The color of the head appeared mostly black, although in the right light there was an iridescent purple sheen. There was a small, white, comma-shaped spot on the face, in front of the eye and just above the base of the bill. This spot was smaller and of a different shape than that of a Common. The head profile was also different with a steeper forehead and a less-rounded head profile. The chest, flanks, and underside were white. The legs and feet were orange. The mantle and wings were mostly black, except for a distinct line of white spots on the scapulars that extended forward to the shoulder. A narrow black wedge extended forward from the shoulder, almost to the waterline. This is the seventh record of a Barrow's Goldeneye in Iowa. All of the records have been of males, with a possible female accompanying one of the males. By month, the records are from March (2-one remaining into April), November (2), and December (3-one remaining into January).



4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Laughing Gull
 Number: 1 probable second-winter
 Location: above Lock 19, Keokuk, Lee Co., IA
 Habitat: resting on a log in river
 Date: 8-9 July 1994
 Time: 4:05-4:30 p.m. on 8 July and 6:15-6:28 a.m. on 9 July
 Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014
 Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I was looking over some gulls resting on a log just above Lock 19 when I noticed a smaller, slimmer gull with a dark gray mantle which I immediately recognized as a Laughing Gull. The log was barely on the Iowa side of the river, though the Laughing Gull made several short flights which clearly carried it into Iowa.

The following are the brief notes I wrote down with the bird under observation. Slightly smaller, but much slimmer than a Ring-billed Gull. Wingtips extending well beyond tail when at rest. Bill and legs black. Bill nearly as long as that of a Ring-billed Gull with a slight bulge at tip. Legs as long as those of a Ring-billed Gull standing two feet from bird. Eye dark. Forehead and crown white, grayish wash across nape, most pronounced in the auricular. Breast, belly, and vent white, except for darker gray wash on flanks and shoulders. Mantle and upperwing dark gray, slightly darker than those of a Ring-billed Gull. Outer primaries black, lacking the white tips of an adult bird. In flight, at least the outermost 5 primaries were black, the inner primaries being dark gray and the same color as the secondaries, secondary coverts, and mantle. The undersides of the outer primaries were also black. The tips of the secondaries and inner primaries were white, forming a narrow white trailing edge. Tail white with a narrow, broken, black subterminal band (the central and outermost tail feathers were white). Wings long and pointed in flight.

The lack of a hood, lack of brown color on the body or wings, and broken tail band were used to age the bird as second-year. Grant (1986) indicates that most second-summer birds "acquire full hood as adult summer". This bird resembled a second-winter bird [especially the bird in photo 158 on p. 238 of Grant (1986)] because of the wing pattern and lack of a hood. Grant indicates that birds may acquire second-winter plumage as early as June and July. I believe the bird may have been molting from first-summer to second-winter plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated: Franklin's Gull is the only species this bird was likely to be confused with. The larger size, longer, more pointed wings, lack of white color in the primaries, longer, larger bill, dark legs and bill, and gray wash on nape (rather than a more distinct half-hood) are sufficient to eliminate Franklin's Gull.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good, but at some distance. Sun behind me on 8 July, but looking almost directly into sun on 9 July. Estimated viewing distance was 300-400 m. I used a Kowa 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with Laughing Gulls from recent residence in North Carolina. Have also seen several in Iowa. Extensive experience with Franklin's Gulls from Iowa and other Midwest states.

References consulted:

Kaufman Advanced Birding
NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America
Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written during initial observation
 How long before this form completed: written 14 July 1994