

Mew Gull
8 Sep 1995
Fairport, Muscatine Co., IA
*Peter C. Petersen
IBL 66:21, 97

Record Number: 95-50
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, 52803
[6/7/96]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:21
Records Committee: IBL 66:97

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D, Description adequate for Mew Gull. Drawing of wing-tip appears to match closely that in National Geographic Field Guide but not photos and drawings in other guides (Seabirds: Harrison, Gulls: Grant).

A-D, Textbook description.

A-D, Unmarked bill at 20 m. is definitive.

NA, The details provided are strongly suggestive or even diagnostic of Mew Gull. I have difficulty with a 5-minute observation by one observer for such an extraordinarily rare sighting. The only other September record of Mew Gull in central United States was an adult on Lake Superior on 19 September 1982 (Janssen 1982, The Loon 54:247-248). Could this have been an odd-billed Ring-billed Gull?

NA, Positive vote based on yellow un-marked bill -- description and picture suggest canus -- extensive white in primaries (canus very similar to Ring-billed). However, overall description sketchy -- picture a little hard to understand.

RE-VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D, Five minutes at 20 meters is a long sighting!

NA, Deferring to NA comment. While I think considering aberrant plumages or soft parts is highly risky, the absence of September records except for one on the Great Lakes is telling. This report should probably not be included in the literature.

A-D, The amount of white in the outer primaries and pure yellow bill eliminate Ring-billed variations I am familiar with.

NA, I will change to a more conservative vote here because of difficulty in evaluating wing pattern. The bill description, however, certainly fits Mew Gull. I don't ever recall seeing an adult Ring-billed Gull with an unmarked bill.

NA, see my previous comments. Why were there no other observers of this bird? Was it looked for again? Most Iowa rare gull records are based on observation by multiple observers and often include photographs.

A-D, Description is adequate; I withdraw my comment on canus, as adults of canus and brachyrhynchus are very similar. Picture of wing tip differs as expected from Ring-billed, and, along with unmarked yellow bill, I am convinced.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

95-50

What species? Mew Gull How many? 1

Location? Fairport Fish Hatchery, Muscatine Co. IA

Type of Habitat? Fish rearing ponds + adj. Miss. River


When? date(s): 8 Sep. 1995 time: 8:05 to 8:10 AM C.S.T.

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport, IA 52803

Others with you: no one

Others before or after you: no one to my knowledge

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.

Adult gull, head, neck & underparts white, mantle medium grey with narrow white trailing edge on dorsal side, wing tips had narrow edge of black on about half the primaries - outermost, & some black after white on 2 outermost primaries. Tail white. Bill yellow, no black ring, legs yellow. Underwing very pale grey to off white, black markings as on dorsal side. Black outer primary tips at a very small amount of white at the tip of each feather. wing tip:  sized seemed that of a Ring-bill, but no other bird was nearby for comparison - wing beat Ring-bill-like.

Similar species; how eliminated: Ring-billed Gull. much more black on primary tips, black ring on yellow bill

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Thin overcast, bird always in flight, within 20m. at closest (est.) 10x40 Zeiss binocs. - sun to birds side part of time.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: seen once previously in Iowa, hundreds seen in Alaska.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none before, checked Geo guide after.

How long before field notes made? 5 min this form completed? 1 hour

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

7/24/96

Dear Tom;

Ross had a note in the last I & L regarding the lack of a photo of Spotted Towhee taken in Iowa. Enclosed is a print from the Pine Hill banding project which should suffice.

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Some comments re. 6/7 committee comments:
New-bird never banded - no chance to relocate as it flew off to the river & trees didn't allow me to tell if it went east or west.
Lesser Black-backed - Re. distance from in physical set-up at Lock 13 - you drive 1.5 mi along a levee to get to lock which is closer to Iowa shore than Ill. Then you go north on a raised roadway along the channel about $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. From this point (where we were) the circular structure with ~~no~~ navigational lights is 900 m. That is our distance from the bird. This structure is about 5 m. over the water, so boat waves are not a problem. The committee should band the W. sp. more frequently or at least once in the Clinton area. We wrote the documentation together as we had compromised any individual objectivity.

Sincerely,
Pete