

Laughing Gull

17 Aug 1996

Runnells A., Marion Co., IA

\*S. Dinsmore, \*Cummins

also 5 Sep at Red Rock Res.; IBL 67:22, 67:82, P-0525, Dinsmore 1998

Record Number: 96-56

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [4/6/97]

Ray Cummins, 609 S. Main St., Centerville 52544

PHOTOGRAPH

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 5 Sep 1996, P-0525

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:22

Records Committee: IBL 67:82

Dinsmore, S. J. 1998. Laughing Gulls in central Iowa. IBL  
68:21.

VOTE: 4 A-P, 3 A-D

A-D, Photo is not diagnostic.

A-P, Brown color and heavy bill support ID.

A-P, Juvenile.

A-D, Is the description the same bird as the photos?

Documentations Aug 17 and photo 5 Sep. Bird in photo looks a little small compared to Ringbills to be a Laughing, although descriptions seem sound for juv Laughing. I would like to discuss/clarify date of photo.



Laughing Gull 96-56 P-0525  
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA  
5 Sep 1996 Stephen J. Dinsmor

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Eurasian Tree Sparrows nest more often in holes in trees, rather than in or on buildings, but readily accept nest boxes (Anderson 1978, Summers-Smith 1995). Where they occur with House Sparrows (*P. domesticus*), Eurasian Tree Sparrows may be displaced unless safe nest sites are available. In Missouri, nest boxes with an entrance diameter of 29 mm were used by Eurasian Tree Sparrows whereas nest boxes with larger diameters were used by House Sparrows (Anderson 1978). The nest box that was used here, though having a large entrance, seemed distant enough from farmsteads to preclude House Sparrows (PEL). Assuming an incubation period of 12 days and nestling period of 14 days (Anderson 1978), this nesting attempt probably began about 1 June. In comparison with Missouri studies (Anderson 1978), this nesting may well have been a second brood.

Our visits to Burlington are infrequent, but checking the Tama Road-levee area is a usual activity, often successful in seeing Eurasian Tree Sparrows. One had been seen near this same box during a visit earlier this year (6 April 1997). Tama Road parallels the levee and Mississippi River north of Burlington. This area consists of bottomland woodland, levee, and numerous river cabins (generally east of the road) and row crops (to west). Numerous bluebird boxes have been placed throughout this flood plain east of Highway 99. Most likely, nest sites selected by Eurasian Tree Sparrows have been more inconspicuous than the nest we found. This nest serves as another indication of an established and growing population in southeastern Iowa.

LITERATURE CITED

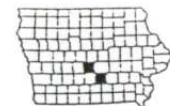
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Jackson, L. S., C. A. Thompson, J. J. Dinsmore, B. L. Ehresman, J. Fleckenstein, R. Cecil, L. M. Hemesath, and S. J. Dinsmore. 1997. *The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA.  
Kent, T. H., and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Privately published, Iowa City and Ames, IA.  
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Silcock, W. R. 1992. Christmas Bird Count 1991-92. *Iowa Bird Life* 62:39-50.  
Silcock, W. R. 1993. Christmas Bird Count 1992-93. *Iowa Bird Life* 63:33-44.  
Silcock, W. R. 1994. Christmas Bird Count 1993-94. *Iowa Bird Life* 64:33-44.  
Silcock, W. R. 1995. Christmas Bird Count 1994-95. *Iowa Bird Life* 65:30-43.  
Silcock, W. R. 1996. Christmas Bird Count 1995-96. *Iowa Bird Life* 66:40-52.  
Summers-Smith, J. D. 1995. *The Tree Sparrow*. J. D. Summers-Smith, Guisborough, England.

Field Museum, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605-2496 (PEL); and 18346 Page Court, Homewood, IL. 60430-3320

LAUGHING GULLS IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

During 1996, I saw three Laughing Gulls in central Iowa. Here, I provide details of each sighting and comment on their status in Iowa.



On 10 May 1996, I observed an adult Laughing Gull at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The bird was resting on Sandpiper Beach in the company of Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns. I watched and photographed the bird from 10:24 to 10:40 a.m. and noted the following. The bird was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull and much slimmer. The bird was in alternate plumage with a black hood, faint white eye crescents, and blood-red bill. The mantle and upperwings were dark gray except for black primaries. The underparts and tail were white. The legs were black. In flight, I noted that the undersides of the outer primaries were black and there was no white bar on the upperwing separating the black primaries from the gray upperwing.

On 17 August 1996, Jim Sinclair, Ray Cummins, and I were birding Runnells Wildlife Area in Marion County. We were walking along the main dike when I saw a smaller gull flying with Ring-billed Gulls. I recognized the bird immediately as a juvenile Laughing Gull. We studied the bird at close range intermittently from 9:00 to 10:35 a.m. The bird was slightly smaller and slimmer-winged than a Ring-billed Gull. The bird was almost entirely brown, except for a paler face, throat, and belly, and black primaries. The black bill was rather long and slightly drooped. The eye was dark with prominent white eye crescents, especially around the posterior end of the eye. The mantle and scapulars were edged with pale buff giving the bird a somewhat scaly appearance. In flight, there was a broad, black terminal tail band. The legs appeared black, and the bird seemed long-legged compared to a Ring-billed Gull. I aged the bird as a juvenile because of the extensive brown color on the body and wings.

Finally, on 5 September 1996, I saw a juvenile Laughing Gull near the north end of the Highway 14 bridge at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. This bird's description matched that of the juvenile seen earlier at Runnells Wildlife Area. I watched the bird from 12:45 to 1:10 p.m. and photographed it. It is possible this was the same bird seen on 17 August.

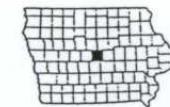
None of these birds were relocated after the initial sighting. Records of Laughing Gulls in Iowa continue to increase as observers become more aware of the possibility of finding them. There are a few records from spring (April-May), but most are from fall (July-October) with a peak from early August to mid-September.

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WESTERN TANAGER IN STORY COUNTY

KEVIN HEALY

On the afternoon of 8 May 1997 my neighbor, M. J. Hatfield, called to alert me to the presence of a Western Tanager near my home. Shortly after 4:00 p.m. an adult male Western Tanager in breeding plumage visited one of our feeders, sampling oranges slices set out to attract Baltimore Orioles. I observed



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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Laughing Gull  
Number: 1 juvenile  
Location: Runnells W.A., Marion Co., IA  
Habitat: large lake  
Date: 17 August 1996  
Time: 9:00-10:35 a.m.  
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014  
Others who saw bird: Jim Sinclair, Ray Cummins

Description of bird(s): We were birding along the main dike at Runnells W.A. when I spotted a smaller gull flying with Ring-billed Gulls. I recognized the bird immediately as a juvenile Laughing Gull. The bird was slightly smaller and slimmer-winged than a Ring-billed Gull. The bird was almost entirely brown, except for a paler face, throat, and belly and black primaries. The black bill was rather long and slightly drooped. The eye was dark with prominent white eye crescents, especially around the posterior end of the eye. The mantle and scapulars were edged with pale buff giving the bird a somewhat scaly appearance. In flight, there was a broad, black terminal tail band. The legs appeared black and the bird seemed long-legged compared to a Ring-billed Gull. I aged the bird as a juvenile because of the extensive brown color on the body and wings.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, brown coloration, and bill and leg color eliminated other gull species.

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

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with the species from recent work in North Carolina. I have also seen several in Iowa in recent years.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: none written

How long before this form completed: written 17 August 1996

Rare Bird Documentation

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Species: Laughing Gull (immature)

Number: 1

Location: Runnells WMA, Marion Co.

Observer: Ray Cummins

Others before/with/after: with Steve Dinsmore & Jim Sinclair

Date: 8/17/96      Time bird seen: 9:30am to 10:00am

Habitant: Open mudflat

Circumstances: Sighted as it flew in and landed. It made several very close fly bys.

Description: The gull had a long decurved black bill. It had a wide black subterminal tail band which was complete to the edge. The primaries, secondaries, and greater coverts of the upper & lower wings were dull black. The other upper coverts and the mantle were a lighter brownish gray. The rump was white. The eye was surrounded by a blackish smudge. The legs were black. The under parts were gray fading to a lighter gray towards the belly.

Description of voice: n/heard

Similarly appearing species: Franklin's gull would have had a partial tailband and a shorter straighter bill.

Distance: 10 to 50 yds

Optical equipment: 8x40 binoculars

Light: good

Previous experience with species: I have seen several in Iowa and many in Florida.

Anyone have any reservations: no.

Books and references: none.

Time of field notes: none.

Final typing: 12/1/96.

Signature: Ray Cummins      Address: 609 S. Main Street, Centerville, IA 52544.

Date: 12/1/96