

Common Black-headed Gull

2 Nov 1989

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

S. Dinsmore, B.J. Rose

also 11/4; photos by B.J. Rose; IBL 60:11, 15, 61:85, Dinsmore 1993

Record Number: 89-39
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 2 Nov

B. J. Rose, 4 Nov

PHOTOGRAPHS

B. J. Rose, P-0372

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:11, 15

Records Committee: IBL 61:85

Dinsmore, S. J. 1993. Common Black-headed Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 63:53-54.

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 A-P

A-D: Description is good, especially by Dinsmore; "blood-red bill" pretty well eliminates possibility of Bonaparte's Gull. Photos are not conclusive but wing seems too long and pointed to be Bonaparte's.

A-D: Combination of red bill, white leading edge to wing, and dark underwings clinches this one. Would consider upgrading vote to A-P after seeing original photos again.

A-D: The detailed description from close and fairly close views of this bird w/ basically all important field marks noted, make this rare midwest gull acceptable.

A-D: Dinsmore documentation well done and conclusive. Rose documentation taken by itself not as conclusive and beyond doubt, description lacking several key marks. A-D until I see photos again; copies not enough detail to tell.

A-D: Good descriptions on a great bird.

A-P: Convincingly documented by experienced observers. Photos clearly eliminate Bonaparte's by "jizz" of bird and dark underwings.

REVIEW OF PHOTOS (at meeting of 29 July 1990): Photos were felt to be suggestive of this species. A motion to change to A-P was not approved.

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- Lapland Longspur:** CBC numbers were low, possibly due to heavy snow cover over much of the state. An observation by Matt Kenne suggests that many wintered s. of Iowa: "many thousands" were heard flying over Algona after a snowfall in early December. Very few remained in Cerro Gordo Co. (CuN, JLW), and no large midwinter flocks were reported, the largest 100 on 30 Dec in Clay Co. (LAS). Large flocks were reported in late February in Johnson and Linn counties (JLF), probably returning migrants. 3 came to a feeder with Horned Larks at Rippey (SRL). Strange things were happening at Rippey this winter!
- Snow Bunting:** Few were reported on CBCs, but good numbers appeared in midwinter. Largest numbers were as expected in the north, including 700-900 in Dickinson Co. 18 Jan (DBi), 550 in Cerro Gordo Co. 17 Jan (JLW), and 600 near Burt, Kossuth Co. on 14 Jan (MCK). That weird feeder at Rippey (or is it Ripley?) had 10 Snow Buntings with the aforementioned Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks. None were reported s. of I-80.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Unusual in midwinter were a few birds wintering in Cerro Gordo Co., including females (CJF, JLW, RGo), and small flocks along the Big Sioux and Rock rivers, where they are usually absent in midwinter (JV). A female, possibly an early returning bird, was at Cone Marsh 28 Feb (RHo).
- Meadowlark sp.:** A few overwintered as far north as Cherokee Co. where 1-3 were seen throughout the period (DBi), Ida Co. where 2 were present in January (PE), and Story Co., where 9 were found near Hendrickson Marsh 23 Jan (HZa).
- Eastern Meadowlark:** None were identified this winter, including CBCs.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Amazing for so far north in midwinter was a male with a mixed flock of blackbirds at a cattle lot in Kossuth Co. 14 Jan (MCK). There are at least two winter records for Minnesota (Janssen).
- Rusty Blackbird:** Very unusual northerly midwinter records were a male in a Mason City yard 9-10 Feb (CJF), and 10 in the mixed blackbird flock seen 14 and 21 Jan in Kossuth Co. (MCK). Also unusual were 3 at Big Marsh, Butler Co. on 30 Jan (JSi). One on 27 Dec was rather late as far north as Rush L., Palo Alto Co. (THK).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** None were found on CBCs, and so the only reports this winter were of 4 birds in the noted mixed blackbird flock in Kossuth Co. 14 Jan (MCK), 3 at a Rock Falls feeder 9-10 Jan (*CuN), both extremely unusual northerly winter records, and, at a more usual location, 8 birds in Indianola on 23 Jan (JSi).
- Common Grackle:** Overwintering is uncommon, and usually only singles or very small groups are found, mostly in S Iowa. Thus of interest were 5 at a feeder in Mason City throughout (RGo) and 3 in Kossuth Co. in the mixed blackbird flock 14 Jan (MCK). Noteworthy were up to 10, all males, wintering in Ames (JJD).
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Usually absent in winter, this species is rare as far north as Kossuth Co., where an amazing 30 were in the mixed blackbird flock 14 and 21 Jan (MCK). A comparable record in terms of rarity was a male and 5 females in Mason City 8-13 Jan (CJF).
- Northern Oriole:** Dennis Thompson reported an unusually yellow oriole at his feeder on two brief occasions; the possibility of Scott's Oriole was considered, but the bird was tentatively identified as an intergrade of "Bullock's" and "Baltimore" races ("DTh).
- Pine Grosbeak:** The only bird found was on the Marshalltown CBC.
- Purple Finch:** Numbers were down this winter, probably because they were all in the Shell Rock R. Greenbelt, where up to 120 wintered (JSi, CuN). The only other midwinter report was from Grammer Grove W.A. 3 and 31 Jan (MPr).
- House Finch:** High count was 70 in a Fairfield yard 13 Feb (DCP). Record numbers were found on CBCs.
- Red Crossbill:** Only two reports were received after CBCs. 3 females and a male were at Logan Park Cemetery in Sioux City 31 Dec (THK), and 4 were picking up grit on the roadside on 6 Jan in Steamboat Rock (MPr).
- White-winged Crossbill:** None were found on CBCs and so the lone report for the winter was of 6 in Iowa City 29 Dec (THK).
- Common Redpoll:** Following the first CBC miss of this species in 10 years, only one report was received; "a few" were at Sioux Center feeders from mid January to 8 Feb (JV). Clearly, this was not a winter-finch year.
- Pine Siskin:** This was the only northern finch present in any numbers this winter, although it was hardly an invasion. Siskins occurred statewide in generally small flocks, with the best count 100 at the LeMars Cemetery on 5 Dec (THK).
- American Goldfinch:** No remarkable reports were received- although it was "very scarce" at feeders in Rippey (SRL), possibly due to the presence of those Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and Lapland Longspurs!

Evening Grosbeak: None were found this winter or on CBCs for the second straight year.

CONTRIBUTORS

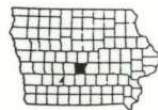
Carol A. Alexander (CAA), Fairfield; Pam Allen (PA), West Des Moines; Reid Allen (RA), West Des Moines; Dick Bierman (DBi), Cherokee; Tanya E. Bray (TEB), Bellevue, NE; Gordon J. Brand (GJB), Newton; G. Gordon Brown, Jr. (GGB), Ames; Dennis Carter (DC), Decorah; Robert I. Cecil (RIC), Des Moines; Raymond L. Cummins (RLC), Centerville; David L. Dankert (DLD), Cedar Rapids; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Raleigh, NC; Daniel C. Dorrance (DCD), Davenport; James O. Durbin (JOD), Marion; Bery Engebretsen (BE), Des Moines; Peter Erzen (PE), Ida Grove; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Rita A. Goranson (RGo), Mason City; Richard Hollis (RHo), Iowa City; Nelson Hoskins (NHo), Ottumwa; Ann M. Johnson (AMJ), Norwalk; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Sharon R. Laub (SRL), Rippey; Curt Nelson (CuN), Mason City; Marietta A. Petersen (MAP), Walnut; Peter C. Petersen (PCP), Davenport; D. Randall Pinkston (DRP), Iowa City; Don Poggensee (DPo), Ida Grove; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Mark Proescholdt (MPr), Liscomb; James E. Scheib (JES), Iowa City; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Darrin Siefken (DSi), Tripoli; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; Dennis Thompson (DTh), Johnston; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; Jan L. Walter (JLW), Mason City; Eva B. Wiedemeyer (EBW), Carroll; Hank Zaletel (HZa), Colo.

Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

At 4:17 p.m. on 2 November 1989, I was birding Cherry Glen Recreation Area at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County, when I saw an adult Common Black-headed Gull with a small flock of Bonaparte's Gulls. The first thing that caught my eye was the dark underwing. The bird then landed on the water with several Bonaparte's Gulls and remained there for 15 minutes. I estimated that the bird was 25% larger than a Bonaparte's Gull. The mantle and upperwing were very light gray, noticeably paler than those of a Bonaparte's Gull. The head was white, except for a small black spot directly behind each eye. The bill was proportionately longer than the bill of a Bonaparte's Gull and was blood red, not black in color. The underparts and tail were also white. The tail was square at the tip, not forked or wedge-shaped. After resting on the water, all of the gulls flew southwest across the lake towards the dam, presumably to roost. This gave me a good opportunity to study the wing pattern in detail. The upperwing was mostly pale gray, except that the outermost two or three primaries were white, forming a distinct white wedge on the outer wing, similar to that of a Bonaparte's Gull. There was a thin black border to the outer primary. The axillars were white. The undersides of the primaries were black, gradually fading to white towards the inner secondaries. The undersides of the outer two or three primaries were white. Based on the largely white head, red bill, and wing pattern, I aged the bird as an adult in basic plumage.



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The bird could not be relocated on 3 November, but was seen briefly on 4 November by several birders.

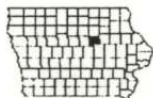
This is the first record of a Common Black-headed Gull in Iowa, and one of the few records from the Midwest. Among states adjacent to Iowa, the species has been reported from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, and Illinois. However, with the increased reports of this species along the Atlantic Coast, more records from interior states can be expected in the future.

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DIET OF A NORTHERN HAWK OWL IN IOWA

DAVID J. CONRADS

During the winter of 1981-82 a Northern Hawk Owl was observed in Waterloo. This is the only documented and photographed hawk owl in the state. The bird was first observed 25 December 1981 and was last seen 25 February 1982. During this period 20 pellets were collected from below the roosts of the owl. The pellets were recently dissected and crania of prey species were identified. Twenty-three meadow voles and two mice of the genus *Peromyscus* were identified from the remains.



Little has been written about the food habits of this species. In Minnesota, eight whole or partial pellets of a hawk owl were found in early spring 1979. Six meadow voles, one short-tailed shrew, and one Ruffed Grouse were identified from the remains (Axelrod 1980). Mikkola (1983) reported that microtines composed 95.7% of Northern Hawk Owl diets during summer in Northern Europe, 56.8% during the winter. The lower percentage in the winter was thought to be due to the snow cover making it difficult for the owls to locate microtines. During the period that the hawk owl was seen in Waterloo, the ground was snow covered (Bob Myers, pers. comm.). It is not surprising that the main diet of the hawk owl in Iowa was the meadow vole since both the owl and the vole are active primarily during the day (Eckert 1973), Schwartz and Schwartz 1981). I thank Tom Wagner for collecting the pellets, Dr. Nixon Wilson for preserving them, and Bob Flamm and his students from Walnut Ridge Baptist Academy for assisting with the pellet dissection.

LITERATURE CITED

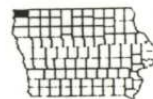
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Eckert, A. W. 1973. *The owls of North America*. Doubleday and Co., Inc. Garden City, NY 278 pp.
Myers, B. 1982. Iowa's first Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*). *Iowa Bird Life* 52:31-32.
Mikkola, H. 1983. *Owls of Europe*. T. and A. D. Poyser. Calton, England. 397pp.
Schwartz, C. W., and E. R. Schwartz. 1981. *The wild mammals of Missouri*. Univ. of Missouri Press. Columbia, MO 356 pp.

Macbride Raptor Center, E216 Field House, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN IN LYON COUNTY

MARTY EBY

At approximately 9:30 a.m. on 11 December 1992, while hunting pheasants in section 12, Sioux Township, Lyon County, my dog captured a female Greater Prairie-Chicken. The bird was caught in a large brome field and died within a few minutes. In the hand, I immediately recognized the bird as a prairie-chicken, a bird I am familiar with from north-central Nebraska. The short, barred tail, feathered legs, and strongly barred underparts supported the identification. The remains of the bird were frozen and later transferred to the bird collection at Iowa State University.



Greater Prairie-Chickens are now accidental in Iowa. All recent records are from western Iowa and were found in winter. These birds probably were migrants from Nebraska or South Dakota and include one on 7 February 1979 in Harrison County (Schaufenbuel 1979) and one on 2 January 1984 in Osceola County (Spengler 1984). The Iowa Department of Natural Resources released prairie-chickens in Monona County in 1980 and 1982 and in Ringgold County in 1987-89. Birds from the first release were seen there for several years and then disappeared while those in Ringgold County have been seen several times in recent years.

LITERATURE CITED

- Schaufenbuel, J. 1979. Greater Prairie Chicken in Harrison County. *Iowa Bird Life* 49:26-27.
Spengler, R. 1984. Greater Prairie Chicken in Osceola County. *Iowa Bird Life* 54:21.

411 W. Indiana Ave., George, IA 51237

I.O.U. BUSINESS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Lake Red Rock, Saturday, 7 November 1992

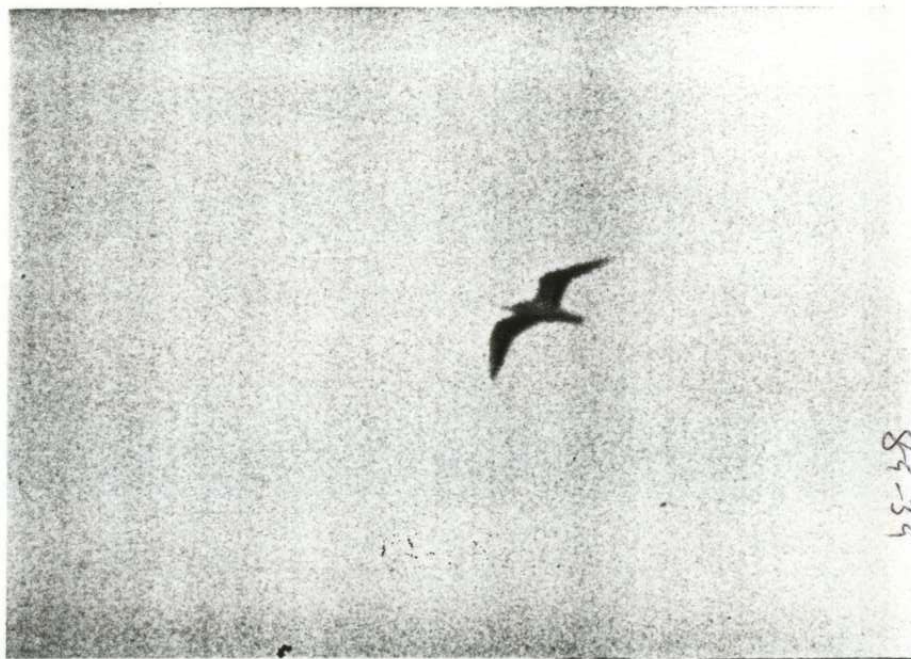
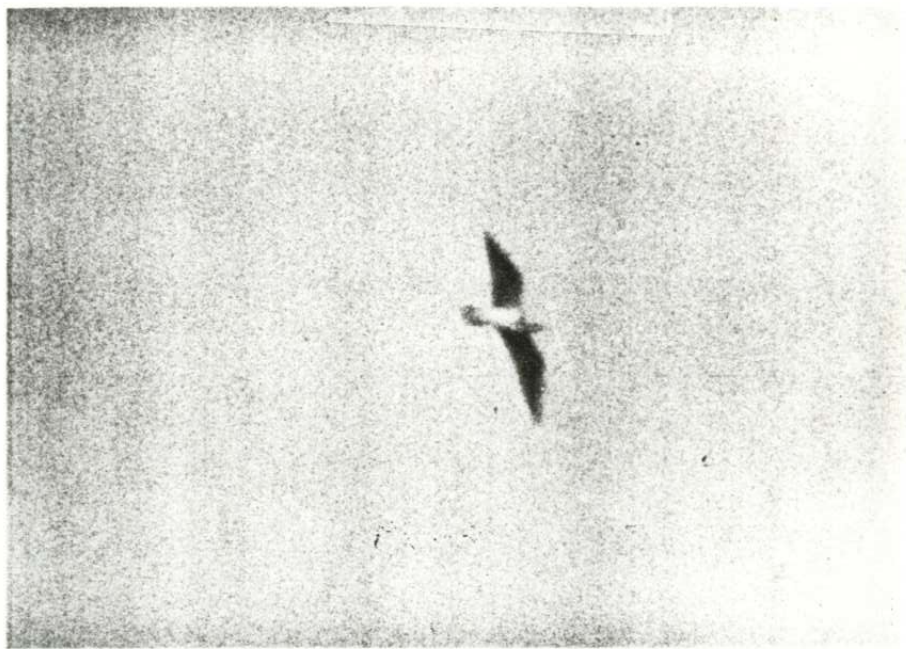
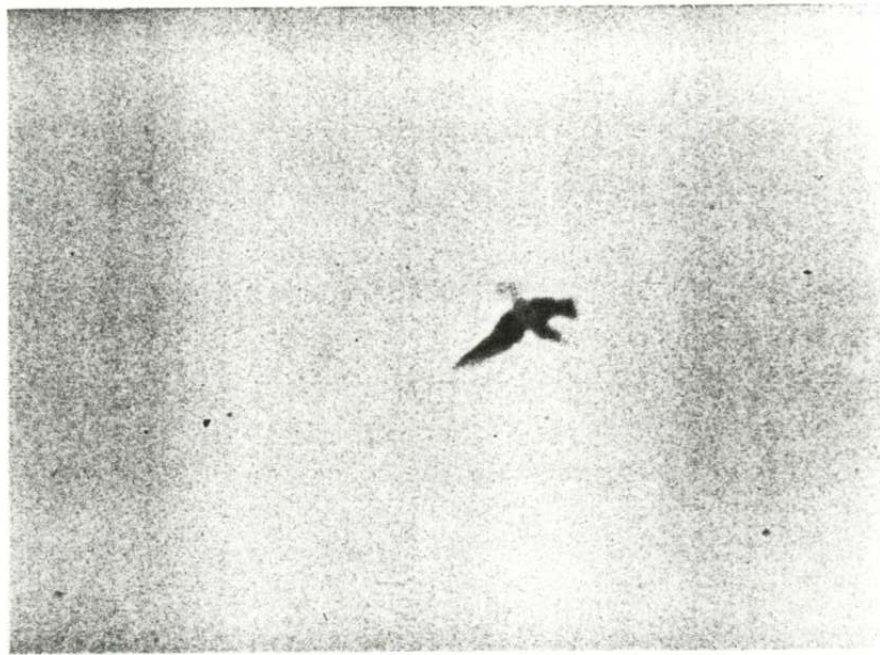
HILDA A. SICKELS, SECRETARY

Present: Ann Barker (presiding), Bob Cecil, Hilda Sickels, Pam Allen, Eloise Armstrong, Diane Porter, Mark Proescholdt, Harold White. Others present: Tom Kent, Francis Moore, Hank Zaletel. The minutes for the 11 April 1992 Board meeting were approved as distributed and published in *Iowa Bird Life* (motion by Allen, seconded by Armstrong). The treasurer's report, including a balance sheet, statement of support, revenues and expenses, and membership information, was distributed and accepted.

Committee Reports

Records: Kent reported that the committee is up to date with records and the 1991 annual report has been completed. To reduce photoduplication costs, two copies of photos are being circulated for review and then used for archival purposes. The budget request for 1993 will be slightly higher. The following nominations for new members to the committee were submitted to the board: 1), for a 6-year term beginning in 1992, to succeed himself, Francis Moore; and 2), for a 6-year term beginning in 1993, to succeed Mark Proescholdt, Ann Johnson. Both were approved. Recently, the

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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Common Black-headed Gull

How Many? 1 winter adult

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Folk Co.-off Cherry Glen Rec. Area

Habitat? large reservoir

Date? 2 Nov 1989

Time? 4:17-4:42 p.m.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames

Others who saw bird: not certain, but someone reported the bird two days later

Description of bird: I was parked at Cherry Glen, looking over a number of Ring-billed Gulls, when I noticed a small flock of Bonaparte's Gulls flying up the lake towards me. Since the sun was behind me, all of the gulls were in good contrast with the darker water. As I watched the gulls go by me, I checked the wing pattern of each one (I was looking for a Little Gull). Four or five of the gulls had flown past me when I noticed one of them had much darker underwings. I followed the bird as it slowly worked its way past me and eventually landed about 75 yards from me with a couple of the Bonaparte's. It was now apparent that this bird was larger than the Bonaparte's by at least 25% (estimated). The bird had a very light gray mantle, giving it a much lighter appearance than the Bonaparte's next to it. The head and underparts were white, except for a small dark spot directly behind each eye. This spot was similar to the spot on a Bonaparte's Gull. The most notable difference between this bird and the Bonaparte's was the bill. This gull had a longer bill that was blood red, not black, in color. Otherwise, the bird resembled a Bonaparte's Gull. The legs appeared dark, although they were hard to see well.

The bird remained on the water for about 15 minutes. Finally, the gulls got up and flew SW across the lake, presumably towards the dam to roost. Once again I examined the wing pattern and compared it with the Bonaparte's. The upperwing was light gray, the same color as the mantle, except that the outermost two or three primaries were white, forming a conspicuous white "wedge" on the outerwing. The outermost primary also had a thin black border, similar to that of a Bonaparte's. All of the primaries were tipped with black. The underwing pattern was as follows. The axillars were white, the same color as the underparts. The underside of the primaries was black and showed much contrast to the belly and the rest of the bird. The underside of the secondaries was muted gray fading to white on the innermost secondaries. The tail was entirely white and was square tipped, not forked or wedge shaped.

Similar species and how eliminated: Because of the fairly small size and conspicuous dark spot behind each eye, the bird must have been a Bonaparte's, Little, Common Black-headed, or Ross' gull, or a kittiwake. Separation from Bonaparte's Gull is discussed above. Little Gull eliminated by its smaller size, dark bill, lack of any black color on the upperwing, and uniformly dark underside to the flight feathers. Ross' Gull eliminated by tail shape, bill size and

color, and darker underwing. Both kittiwakes eliminated by bill color, lighter mantle color, and differences in wing pattern.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun behind me for most of the observation and mostly clear skies. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 75 yards, but about 75-100 yards when the bird was in flight. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Bushnell 7x35 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen several dozen Common Black-headed Gulls in Massachusetts and I am familiar with Bonaparte's and Little gulls also.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America and P.J. Grant Gulls: An Identification Guide

How long before field notes were made? while bird was under observation

How long before this form was completed? written evening of 2 Nov 1989

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTING

by B. J. Rose
14937 "N" St.
Omaha, NE 68137

Species: Common Black-headed Gull

No. of birds seen: 1 Sex: Unknown Plumage: Winter Adult

Date(s): November 4, 1989 Time bird seen: 12:30 p.m. to 12:35 p.m.

Locality: (Nearest town, county, state): Approximately 5 miles north of Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa. It passed over western end of Saylorville Lake dam.

Optical equipment: 10x50 Bushnell Custom binoculars

If photographed, copy is enclosed. 4 prints Equipment used: 35 mm Chinon w/600 mm Novoflex

Light conditions: Fairly bright sun.

Distance from bird: 150 - 200 yards; How measured: Estimated

Bird's behavior: The bird appeared from the north over the west side of the lake; circled a few times, as it gained altitude; then passed over the dam, to the south, circling the ponds down-river.

Habitat: Open lake; circling tree-lined ponds and river.

Other observers (w/names & addresses): Douglas Rose, Glenwood, IA; Roger Rose, Omaha, NE; Ken Lauder, Iowa City, IA; and _____, Cedar Rapids, IA.

Description of bird(s): Somewhat larger size than Bonaparte's Gull. Wings were noticeably longer and narrower than Bonaparte's. Underside of wings were gray, with blackish primaries, except for outer 2 or 3 primaries which were white. Photos are poor and grainy, but do show the dark underside of the wing and white outer 2 or 3 primaries; also, the long, narrow wings can be noted.

Description of calls or sounds, and method of delivery: None heard.

Similar species and how eliminated: Bonaparte's is smaller with shorter, broader wings; and most importantly, has white underside of wings, including the primaries.

Prior experience with this and similar species: I have seen Common Black-headed Gulls in Alaska - St. Paul in Pribilof Islands - 1985; Attu Island in Aleutians - 1986; Texas Gulf Coast - 1980; and Wyoming's first record on 11/9/89 (5 days after this bird).

This report was written from notes made during observation _____; after observation X; or

from memory _____. Date of documentation 11/5/89; Date of observation 11/4/89.

Other information: Douglas and Roger Rose and I, were certain we saw this bird at about 8 a.m., on the west side of the lake near the boat launch area. We were glassing the lake, when the gull appeared directly in front of us and flew directly away towards the marina. Not once did it tilt, so that we could see the underside of the wings, however, the flight characteristics were unlike Bonaparte's Gull, being slower and more deliberate. The longer wings were noted. We drove back to the dam about noon, to continue our search for the bird, when it was spotted coming from the north, and flying towards the dam. We yelled at Ken Lauder, who brought his scope to bear on the gull; returned and was able to see the bird, also.

I looked at the gull, through binoculars, long enough to see the dark underside of the wings, the blackish primaries with white outer 2 or 3 primaries, and the long, narrow wings. I then tried to photograph the bird, but it had gained more altitude and was beginning to pass over the dam. The attached photos are grainy, but I think you can detect the dark underwings, dark primaries and white outer primaries. The wing shape is unlike Bonaparte's Gull.

B. J. Rose, Central Flyway MARSH Coordinator
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
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Omaha, NE 68137

B. J. Rose

Date 12/20/89