

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Mew Gull  
20 Dec 1998  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
Stephen J. Dinsmore

Record Number: 98-36  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMRNTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 612 1/2 West Magnolia St., Fort Collins,  
CO [3/23/99]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:68  
Records Committee: IBL 69:89

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Well described.

A-D, First winter.

A-D, Well seen and well described bird and reasonable  
conclusion to separate from Ring-billed.

98-36

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Mew Gull

Number: 1 first-basic

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County, Iowa

Habitat: feeding in spillway and resting on large reservoir

Date: 20 December 1998

Time: 1:46-2:08 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 1/2 West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): Kay Niyo

Description of bird(s): I was scanning a large flock of gulls (mostly Ring-billed Gulls) feeding in the spillway below Saylorville dam when I spotted a smaller, browner gull. The bird was slightly smaller than the smallest Ring-billed Gull. The bill was bicolored; dark at the tip and flesh-colored at the base. Compared to a Ring-billed Gull, the bill was noticeably shorter and much thinner. The eye was dark. The head was slightly paler than the rest of the body with the forehead and throat being the palest areas. The crown and nape were washed with light brown. The mantle was a mix of dark gray and brown feathers, indicating the bird had not yet completed the molt from juvenal to first-basic plumage. The breast and belly were solidly dark brown, becoming paler on the vent area. The legs were dull pink. The upperwing pattern (seen in flight) was as follows: outer primaries and their coverts dark-colored, pale "window" on inner primaries, dark secondary bar, and lighter brown secondary coverts. The rump and uppertail coverts were paler with some narrow brown barring. The rectrices appeared solidly black with very faint white tips. When perched, I thought the bird had a slightly longer primary projection than a Ring-billed Gull. On the basis of these features, I concluded the bird was a Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) near the end of the molt from juvenal to first-basic plumage. We eventually watched the bird fly north over the dam and were able to relocate it a few minutes later resting on the water just above the dam.

Similar species and how eliminated: The only similar species (Ring-billed Gull) was eliminated by the combination of slightly smaller size, smaller bill, more extensive brown color on the underparts, and pattern of the rectrices.

Previous experience with species: I have seen several Mew Gulls in Iowa and Nebraska plus many on the West Coast.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was 75m initially (below dam) and later 400-500m (on reservoir).

References consulted: none

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 23 December 1998