

Laughing Gull 1
13 Apr 1990
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
S. Dinsmore
photo; IBL 61:20, 62:21, P-0365

Record Number: 90-12
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore

PHOTOGRAPH

Stephen J. Dinsmore, P-0365

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:20

Records Committee: IBL 62:21

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P: In my opinion this is a well written document complete details. Eloise and I observed this bird and we felt that it was indeed a Laughing Gull.

A-P: Excellent photo and detailed description.

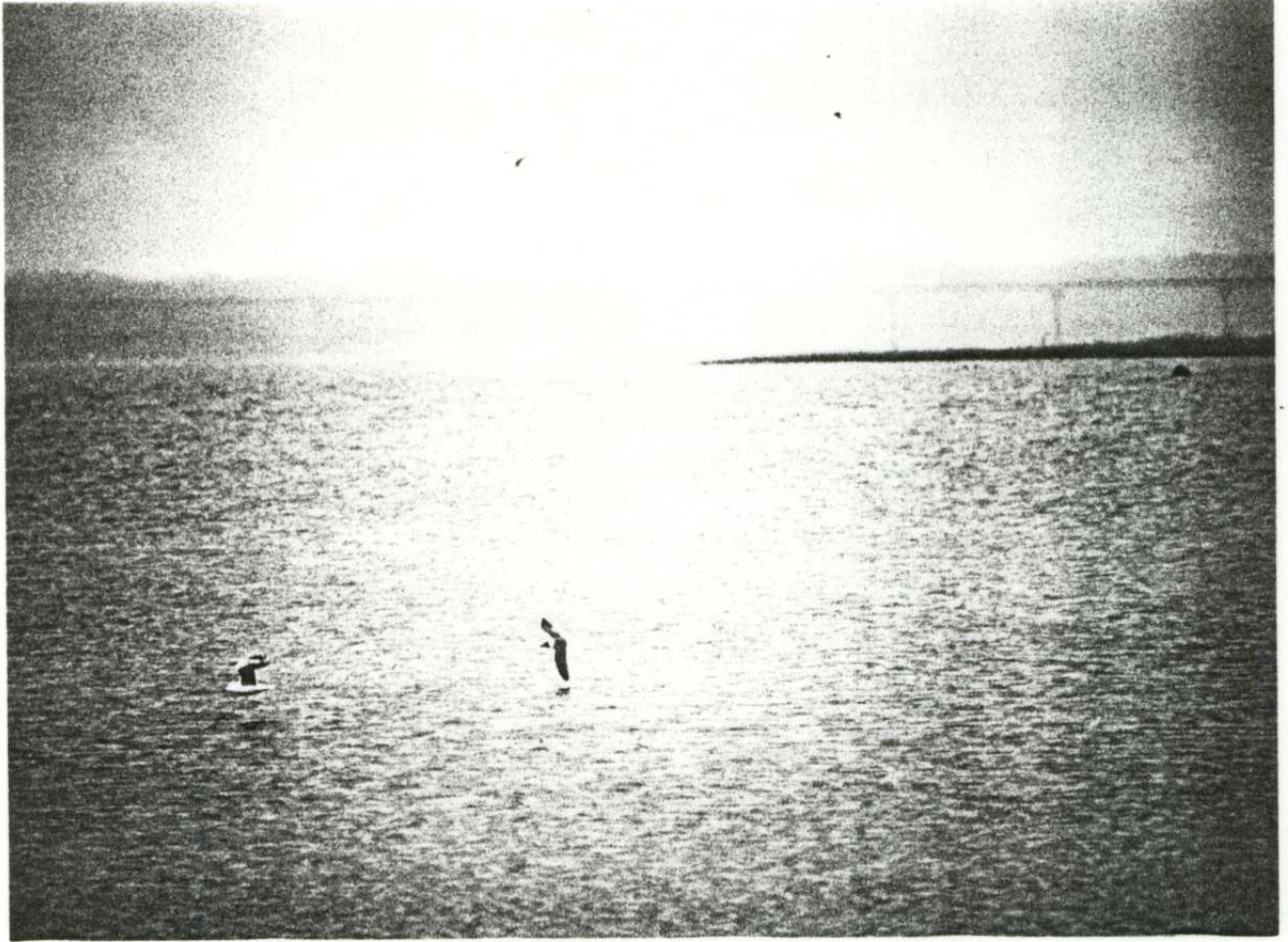
A-P: Convincing details and photo.

A-P: Strong documentation supported by an excellent and diagnostic photo.

A-P: Great documentation eliminates any other species; photo adequate enough to eliminate any other species also.

A-P: Very good documentation and a very good photo.

90-12



DOCUMENTATION FORM**Species:** Laughing Gull**Number:** 1 ad.**Date:** 13 Apr 1990**Time:** 10:48-11:34 a.m. and 12:26-1:20 p.m.**Location:** Oak Grove Beach, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA**Observer(s):** Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames**Others before or after you:** Eugene and Eloise Armstrong

Description of bird(s): When I arrived at the Oak Grove beach area, I soon noticed a "black-headed" gull resting on the beach with about forty ring-billed gulls. My initial impression was that the gull in question was only slightly smaller than the ring-billed gulls. After watching the bird for a couple of hours, I determined that the bird was very nearly the same overall length as a ring-billed gull, but was roughly 10-20% smaller by bulk. The bird was a very slender looking gull, quite unlike the chunky appearance of a Franklin's Gull.

I was easily able to approach within 50 feet of the gull and noted the following. The bird had a complete black hood extending from the base of the bill to about mid-neck. I examined the bird closely for white flecks on the hood, but found none. The bill was dull carmine and was almost exactly the same length as the bill of a nearby ring-billed gull. The bill did not have a pronounced gonys, but was very slightly hooked at the tip. Eye color was not seen. There were faint but discernable white eye crescents which were not joined at either the front or rear of the eye. The mantle was dark slate gray. The wings were the same color as the mantle, except that they gradually darkened to a black wingtip. There was no white bar nor any white spots between the gray inner wing and the black wingtip. From underneath, the primaries were dark gray, noticeably darker than the otherwise white underwing. There was a fairly wide white trailing edge to the wing. The overall wing shape was very similar to that of a ring-billed gull. The collar, tail, and underparts were white. When the bird was perched, the wingtips projected one to two inches beyond the tip of the tail. There were very pale white tips to primaries two through six or seven, seen when the bird was perched. The legs were dull carmine and were the same length as those of nearby ring-billed gulls.

Based on the complete dark hood, white tail, and carmine legs and bill, I concluded that the bird was an adult Laughing Gull in full breeding plumage. I took two photos of the bird during my observation. The one decent photo of the bird in flight is included with this documentation.

Similar species and how eliminated: On the basis of the dark hood, size, and dark gray mantle, all gulls except for Laughing and Franklin's gulls can be removed from consideration. I will admit that I was skeptical that a Laughing Gull could show up in Iowa on such an early spring date; most interior records are from May-June. But, given the evidence, I am convinced that this bird was indeed a Laughing Gull.

The size of this bird, nearly that of a ring-billed gull, favors Laughing Gull. The bill shape and size, length of the legs, wing pattern, and extent of the eye crescents also favor Laughing Gull. An adult Franklin's Gull can be eliminated by the lack of a white bar separating the gray inner wing from the black wingtip. One year-old Franklin's Gulls, however, may show a wing pattern like that of this bird. But, according to Kaufman (1990), such a Franklin's Gull should show some white flecks on the hood, and would be most likely encountered in late spring and summer.

Optical equipment and viewing conditions: Viewing conditions were excellent with an overcast sky. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 50 feet. I used Bausch and Lomb 7x35 binoculars and a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America and Kaufman Advanced Birding

Previous experience with species: I am very familiar with Franklin's Gulls from Iowa, and I have had extensive experience with Laughing Gulls from Florida and Massachusetts.

How long before field notes written? Brief notes written during observation

How long before this form completed? completed 3 Sep 1990