

Great Black-backed Gull  
30 Apr 1987  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
\*Robert K. Myers  
IBL 58:74

Record Number: 87-11  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Robert K. Myers

REFERENCES

Records Committee: IBL 58:74

VOTE: 6-III, 1-abstain

III. Convincing description. Where are all these birds coming from?

III. I can't see anything wrong with Myer's data and analysis, although I lack experience with this species at this age.

III. Good study: description of this large gull pretty much eliminates any other possibility. Why didn't you take a picture of the bird? I would like to have seen it.

III. Would have been helpful for Armstrongs to have documented what they did see themselves.

III. Description is conclusive. Only problem is lateness of date, although there were many gulls around this winter, and young birds are likely stragglers.

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Great Black-backed Gull How many? 1Location? Saylorville Reservoir - Polk Co.Type of habitat? Large, man-made lake - sandy beachesWhen? date(s): 30 April 1987 time: 6:30pm to 6:45pmWho? your name and address: Robert K. Myers R.R. 2, Box 153 Perry, Iowa 50220others with you: noneothers before or (after) you: Gene + Eloise Armstrong (2 days later)

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The bird was a very large, robust gull almost twice as large as the ring-billed gulls near it. The Armstrongs found what was apparently the same bird on May 2 and it was near one obvious herring gull. It was ~~longer~~ longer than this bird also. (conversation with Gene Armstrong)

The head, upper breast, and nape of neck were very white (no streaks)-like someone dipped bird in white paint.

The lower breast was gray-tan with streaks - much contrast with head + upper breast.

The back was whitish to gray with black spots or marks giving the bird a checkered back appearance.

The tail was light (whitish) at base and had a wide black + irregular terminal band.

The bill was all black, very large + heavy (flared out near tip) - bigger than herring gull's.

Legs were pinkish.

Rump was light grayish.

Primaries, leading edge of wing, and wide band on trailing edge of wing were blackish. Central portion of wing was light gray.

Similar species and how eliminated:

The gull was too big and had too long of a bill for herring gull. The checkered back + very contrasty head + upper breast with lower are not consistent with herring. Basically size of bird + its bill eliminated most everything.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Yes

If yes, explain: The Armstrongs did not feel they had a close enough look or knew enough about bird in that plumage to make positive ID.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

My best conditions were good. Light from my right. Clear day.

Distance was about 60 yd. (stepped off) - used 22x scope + 10x40 binocs

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have no previous experience with Gr. Black-backed but quite a little with herring gull.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Gulls by P.J. Grant (second edition)

How long before field notes made? on the spot this form completed? 2 days

MAIL TO: Spring Field Reports Editor, RR. 2, Box 153, Perry, IA 50220



My first view of this bird was of a huge bird <sup>87-11</sup>  
flying toward me. Wings were so long I almost considered  
a pelican before putting binocs on it.

It landed on the beach in front of me and  
was soon joined by 2 ring-billed gulls. IT made  
aggressive moves toward these gulls when they came too close.  
I view~~ed~~<sup>ed</sup> bird with scope here. (60yd)

The bird then flew, by itself, in front of me  
and toward the south end of the lake. I used 10x40  
binoculars here and 22x scope until it was out of sight.  
I checked all of the pull-ins up the lake but could  
not relocate the bird.

I believe the bird was in first-winter to  
first-summer plumage. IT was closer to first-  
summer as it showed the very white head but  
still retained much of the checkered back appearance.