

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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Laughing Gull

19 Oct 1995

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*Stephen J. Dinsmore

also 20 Oct; IBL 66:21, 96; Dinsmore 1996

Record Number: 95-49

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [*3/24/96]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:21

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Dinsmore, S. J. 1996. Two Laughing Gulls in central Iowa. IBL
66:111.

VOTE: 7 A-D

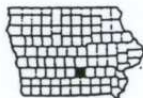
A-D, Description of underwing helpful.

A-D, Details substantiate well an adult winter bird.

CALIFORNIA GULL AT RUNNELLS WILDLIFE AREA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JIM SINCLAIR

On 3 September 1995 we observed a first-basic California Gull east of Swan, Marion County. The bird was with a group of about 300 Ring-billed Gulls on a shallow pond at the Runnells Wildlife Area. We watched and photographed the bird from 10:55 a.m.-12:24 p.m. The bird was slightly bulkier and longer than the largest Ring-billed Gulls. However, the bird was not so large as to stand out by size alone. In general, the plumage was very brown, reminiscent of a juvenile Herring Gull. The bill was slender, long, and distinctly bicolored. The basal two thirds were pink, the distal one third black. The distinction between pink and black on the bill was sharp. The bill had a slight bulge at the tip. The eye was dark. From brief glimpses of the legs, they appeared dull pink. The body, including head, neck, underparts, and mantle, was brown except that the face and throat were slightly paler. The rectrices were entirely dark with no tail band. The rump was paler than the tail and mantle and was finely barred with dark brown. The undertail coverts were also pale with fine, dark barring. The upperwing pattern was as follows: primaries entirely black except slightly paler on base of the innermost one or two, tips of secondaries black, greater secondary coverts dark with pale tips, median and lesser secondary coverts dark brown. The effect was a dark bar along the trailing edge and a paler bar above it, contrasting with dark color on the remainder of the innerwing. The double bar effect on the upperwing was not as clear as illustrated in some field guides because of the lack of contrast between the dark bar on the greater secondary coverts and color of the median and lesser secondary coverts. Based on these features, we concluded the bird was in first-basic plumage. However, the bird may still have been in transition since the legs were not bright pink. Grant (1986) does not indicate the timing of molt in California Gulls. However, several other large larids (e.g., Herring Gull) can acquire first-basic plumage as early as September (Grant 1986).



This bird could not be relocated the next day, but was reportedly seen on 5, 6 September below the dam of Red Rock Reservoir (*IBL* 66:21). This represents the sixth record of California Gull in Iowa. All of the records are in the period September-December and have occurred since 1989. This suggests that California Gulls may be rare but regular fall migrants in Iowa, especially at some of the larger reservoirs and lakes. The records are evenly split between birds in first-basic and adult-basic plumage.

LITERATURE CITED

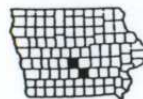
Grant, P. J. 1986. Gulls: A Guide to Identification. T & A. D. Poyser, Staffordshire, England.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014 and 810 North B St., Indianola, IA

TWO LAUGHING GULLS IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 3 September 1995, Jim Sinclair and I saw an adult Laughing Gull in basic plumage with a group of about 300 Ring-billed Gulls east of Swan, Marion County. The gulls were feeding on a shallow pond on part of the Runnells Wildlife Area. We studied the bird from 11:00 a.m.-12:24 p.m. at distances as close as 50 m. The bird was about 20% smaller than the average Ring-billed Gull and noticeably slimmer and longer-winged. Other features noted include the slate-gray mantle and black primaries, lack of any white separating the black primaries from the gray upperwing, the mostly white head with a grayish smudge on the nape behind the eyes, black legs, and the black bill with a pronounced gonydeal angle. The size and shape of the bill were similar to those of nearby Ring-billed Gulls. The very tip of the bill appeared pale. Based on these features, we aged the bird as an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage. I took several photos of the bird as it rested on the mud and water. This bird remained here through 6 September.



On 19 October 1995 I observed an adult Laughing Gull in basic plumage above the dam of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. I was scanning a large flock of Ring-billed Gulls feeding in the middle of the lake when I noticed a slightly smaller gull with a dark gray mantle and upperwings, dark underwings, a black bill, and a nearly white head. I studied the bird in detail from 9:40-10:32 a.m. and from 1:45-2:20 p.m. The plumage of this bird was similar to that of the bird described above. Additionally, I noted that the undersides of the primaries were black, not pale like nearby Franklin's Gulls. I aged the bird as an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage based on the wing and tail patterns. I returned the next day (20 October) and found the bird feeding with Ring-billed Gulls in the same area.

Laughing Gulls are rare visitors to Iowa, but records appear to be on the increase. These represent the 16th and 17th records of Laughing Gulls in Iowa, all of them since 1989. By month, the records are from April (2), May (1), July (5-two remaining into August), August (3), September (4), and October (2). It now appears that a few Laughing Gulls reach Iowa every year. A few adults are seen in spring, probably migrants that overshoot their normal breeding grounds. Post-breeding dispersal in late summer and fall (July-October) produces the majority of the records, usually juveniles.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

RED PHALAROPE AT SPIRIT LAKE

LEE A. SCHOENEWE

On 29 November 1994, I decided to take the afternoon off work and head for Spirit Lake in Dickinson County. I had received a phone call from Stephen Dinsmore who indicated several Oldsquaw had been seen on Spirit Lake. He also said that Gordon Brown of Ames had reported a Red Phalarope off Marble Beach over the weekend. I figured there was a good chance to add an Oldsquaw to my life list, and the Red Phalarope was, well, a hope and a prayer.



95-49

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Laughing Gull

Number: 1 adult

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat: large reservoir

Date: 19-20 October 1995

Time: 9:40-10:32 a.m. and 1:45-2:20 p.m. on the 19th

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I was scanning through a large flock of Ring-billed Gulls feeding in the middle of the lake when I noticed a slightly smaller gull with a dark gray mantle and upperwings, dark underwings, a black bill, and a nearly white head which I immediately recognized as an adult Laughing Gull in basic plumage. I studied the bird in detail and returned the next day to find it feeding in the same area. The bird was only slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, and was similar in shape except that it appeared slimmer. The mantle was dark slate gray. The upperwings were the same color as the mantle, becoming black in the primaries. There was no white dividing line between the black in the primaries and the gray upperwing. The underwing coverts were white, contrasting with the darker undersides of the flight feathers. The undersides of the primaries were black, not pale as on the numerous Franklin's Gulls nearby. The underparts, including the breast, belly, and vent were white. The tail was also white. The bill was black and similar to the bill of a Ring-billed Gull in shape. The bill had a bulbous look at the tip. The head was mostly white, except for a darker smudge behind each eye that extended across the nape. The legs were also black. I aged the bird as an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage based on the wing and tail patterns.

Similar species and how eliminated: The only species of confusion was Franklin's Gull. The larger size, wing pattern, tail pattern, and bill size and shape all eliminated Franklin's Gull, many of which were nearby for comparisons.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with mostly clear skies. Estimated viewing distance was 200-300m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with both Laughing Gulls from recent work in North Carolina.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: none made

How long before this form completed: written 24 October 1995