

California Gull  
13 Oct 1998  
Spirit L., Dickinson Co., IA  
Lee A. Schoenewe  
IBL 69:35

Record Number: 98-29  
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Lee A. Schoenewe, 518 W 4th St., Spencer [3/23/99]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:35  
Records Committee: IBL 69:89

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D, A well-seen and described bird, with nice comparisons to first year Herring Gulls.

NA, Quite possibly a California Gull, a bird I believe is probably regular in the state, but the evidence is not convincing. The most bothersome detail is mantle description of "light gray". This sounds like an adult bird and the most obvious characteristic should be the darker mantle color if it was standing by Ring-bills. It appears that the ID is based primarily on bare-part coloration which is risky. Many gulls may have a red bill spot. Leg and eye colors, while indicative of species, have been proven not to be absolutes. There are records of dark-eyed Herring Gulls and yellow-legged Herring Gulls. Size and head shape can vary considerably within species and are related to sex. The more I learn about gulls, the two features that seem to be the most constant are mantle color and primary pattern. I am unable to adequately evaluate the statement "black tips on primaries."

NA, By mid-Oct. California Gull in winter plumage should have (at least) nape and hind neck heavily streaked. The black bill spot in winter is more extensive, usually present on both mandible and maxilla, but was not noted. Shade of gray not compared with nearby Ring-billed Gull.

A-D, adult.

RE-VOTE (at meeting , 21 Mar 1999): 7 NA

NA, The NA voters have raised several valid points, notably the mantle color and the lack of black on the bill.

NA, Reversing original vote. There are a number of features which bring into question: By mid October there should be streaking on head and neck. The bill should show black markings as well as red. Mantle should be darker gray if compared to ring-billeds.

NA, I agree with the NA comments. I looked at my close-up photos of fall California Gulls taken in California. They all had heavy nape and head streaking, prominent black on upper and lower mandibles with red in lower mandible, greenish-yellow legs, and medium gray mantles. The red on the bill of this bird and white head suggest a 3rd winter Herring Gull (female by size), but the yellow legs do not fit. I cannot identify this bird by the

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description.

NA, Description equivocal, possibly more detail on primary pattern would help.

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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? CALIFORNIA GULL - 1  
Location? TRICKLE SLOUGH AREA OF BIG SPIRIT LAKE  
Type of habitat? NATURAL LAKE WITH POINT OF LAND  
When? date(s): 10/13/98 Time: 3:40 - 4:00 PM  
Who? your name and address LEE A. SCHOENEWE  
S18 W. 4<sup>TH</sup> ST. SPENCER

Others with you EUGENE + ELOISE ARMSTRONG

Others before and after you NONE

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and behavior. OBSERVED A GULL THAT WAS LARGER THAN NEARBY RING-BILLED GULLS. THE BIRD HAD A WHITE HEAD WITH A DARK EYE. THE BILL WAS A DULL YELLOW WITH A RED SPOT NOTICEABLE NEAR THE TIP OF THE LOWER MANDIBLE. THE FOREHEAD WAS ROUNDED AND THE HEAD MORE PIGEON-LIKE THAN A HERRING GULL. THE MANTLE WAS LIGHT GRAY WITH BLACK TIPS ON THE PRIMARIES. WHEN THE BIRD GOT UP OFF THE WATER, CIRCLED AND ALIGHTED AGAIN, WE WERE ABLE TO SEE THE YELLOW LEGS.

Similar species and how eliminated:

• THAYER'S GULL - HEAD SHAPE, BILL SIZE AND LEG COLOR

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: AFTERNOON SUN; 100-200 YDS; 8X40 BINOCULARS  
20X-60X SCOPE

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:  
ADULT CALIFORNIA GULLS IN S. DAKOTA ON MISSOURI RIVER

References and persons consulted before writing description:  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATELY  
this form completed? 6 HOURS

Mail original form to field editor for this season.