

Laughing Gull  
13 Aug 1995  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
\*Dennis Thompson  
IBL 66:21, 96

Record Number: 95-47  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Dennis Thompson, 7503 Wildflower Ct., Johnston [6/7/96]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:21  
Records Committee: IBL 66:96

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D, Size and description adequate. Drawing of hood resembles Franklin's more than Laughing Gull, however.

NA, This bird is very suggestive of Laughing Gull and may have been correctly identified. Supporting the ID was the fact that it was only slightly smaller than accompanying Ring-bills and thought to be larger than Franklin's, although, evidently, none were present for side-by-side comparison. I am voting against this record because of the information developed by Goetz and others on separating these two species. I will not reiterate what was stated; rather, I have enclosed a copy of a review of a similar, previous Iowa record in hope that the Secretary will forward it to the observer. Regarding the broken tail band on a Franklin's Gull, there is a photo of such a bird on page 242 of Grant's "Gulls".

NA, I am not convinced that Franklin Gull is eliminated. The bill shape was not described and the bill length is not clear. The tail band is described as broken, but only Franklin's would be expected to have a broken tail band in the juvenile/1st basic plumage. It should be broken at the outer edges, whereas Laughing's should be complete from edge to edge at this early date.

A-D, 2nd summer molting to 3rd winter.

A-D, This description fits second-winter Laughing Gull. Franklin's Gull has a tail band in first-winter plumage, when it would show a darker partial hood, dark on trailing edge of wing, and other features of a younger bird. At 20 yards, the size and shape of the bill could have been seen to aid in the separation of Laughing and Franklin's gulls. The outer tail feathers are white in Franklin's. What was the pattern of the broken tail band?

RE-VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, I think it would be very unusual for a Franklin's Gull to have this combination of features in mid-August. Broken tail band referred to in Grant's is from spring, although a few Franklin's can retain partial band through summer. Observer is experienced with Franklin's.

A-D, Mia culpa! I mis-aged this bird.

A-D, I sometimes think we make too much of a deal over the differences between Laughing and Franklin's gulls. Anyone who studies gulls for a while can recognize immediately the structural differences, particularly in the bill. I believe this report adequately addresses that issue.

A-D, The first NA does not indicate the age of the bird, so

how can one refer to a previous record or material from Goetz in such a vague manner? The second NA, in my opinion, has misjudged the age of the bird. The photo referred to on page 242 of Grant is a Franklin's in first-winter plumage. Franklin's in first-summer plumage have no tail band. The smoky gray mantle with white trailing edge to the wing and black outer primaries indicates at least first-summer plumage. Technically, this bird is in first-summer/second-winter plumage, not second-summer as stated in the documentation. A more complete description with more details on the details would have been helpful (e.g., description of tail band and wing surfaces). The difficulty in separating Franklin's and Laughing gulls occurs in birds without tail bands; those with tail bands are easy to age and separate.

NA [changed to A-D], Again the NA comments raise doubts in my mind. Especially the comment about "information developed by Goetz and others". What is this? I would be prepared to vote A-D on discussion or reading Goetz material. Addendum: On Laughing Gull -- please change my vote back to A-D as originally filed. I changed it based on the possibility that we would need to consider new evidence.



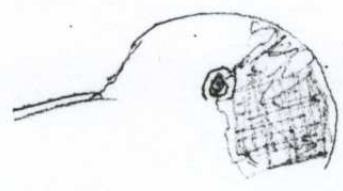
BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

95-47

1. Species Laughing Gull (2<sup>nd</sup> Summer) 2. Number: 1  
3. Location Saylorville Res., Polk Co.  
4. Date: 8/13/95 5. Time Bird seen: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): Hooded gull slightly smaller than accompanying Ring-bills. Mantle was smoky gray with a white rump. Head was white with an irregular hood that barely reached the eye. Had the appearance of an eyering. Bill was <sup>very</sup> dark red, legs appeared dark. No white in the upper wing except for a trailing edge. Outer primaries black. Broken tail band.

7. Description of voice, if heard:  
8. Description of behavior: With a flock of 30 Ring-billed Gulls.  
9. Habitat - general: Beaches at Oak Grove + Sandpiper.  
specific:



10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:  
Larger than a Franklin's Gull. In direct comparison with Ring-billed, only slightly smaller. No white in the primaries. Bill probably longer. Do Franklin's ever have a broken tail band?

11. Distance (how measured)? 20 yards 12. Optical equipment:  
8X42 Bino., 20X Scope  
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Sunny, various angles of light.  
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
Have seen 4 times in Iowa, know Franklin's well.  
15. Other observers: None

16. Did the others agree with your identification?  
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:  
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
WGS, Sea birds. Knew as soon as I saw it that it was a Laughing Gull.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 6 hrs.  
Donnis Thompson Address: 7503 Wildflower Ct.  
Signature  
Date: 8/13/95 City, State: Johnston Ia.

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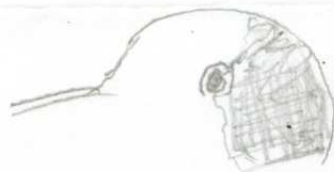
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