

Laughing Gull

4 Jun 1991

Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA

*Cummins

IBL 62:15, 71

Record Number: 91-30
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION: Ray Cummins?

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:15

Records Committee: IBL 62:71

VOTE: 2 A-D, 5 NA

A-D, Unlikely that this could be a bird of the year as Harrison (Seabirds) gives fledgling dates of July-August for Laughing Gull. However, size, wing shape in relation to body, general coloration and bill shape indicate Laughing Gull.

NA, Unfortunately, this bird was not well seen. Candid description of bird flying away one day and bad light the next suggests that we should go conservatively on this. Franklin's not completely discounted. Bill shape, especially at this distance, is subjective. The improbability factor applies at least as much to Laughing as to Franklin's.

NA, This bird was seen briefly at some distance. It would have to be a juvenile to fit this description, and juvenile's don't have a hood. Also, date seems early. More specific details of plumage are needed for me to evaluate this bird.

NA, The description of the bird being a dark gray brown overall is a good start for the juvenile plumage of Laughing Gull. From there there are too many inconsistencies for this species. A bird with a blackish hood such as this bird had would be in at least 2nd winter or 2nd summer plumage. By then the bird should not be gray brown overall. A juvenile Franklin's Gull on the other hand has a partial dark brown hood as does a 1st winter Franklin's. The wings are not completely described. The head color and shape, breast color, mantle color, tail color was not described. The distance is quite great for a lot of detail but some of these areas should have been seen if the long hooked bill was seen. Just not enough to say that this was a juvenile Laughing Gull.

NA, I believe this is likely an immature Laughing Gull, but with a short period of viewing and long distances to the bird I feel I should be cautious and vote NA. I also have some reservations that a Juvenile Franklin's Gull could be a remote possibility.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Sightings in Iowa

Ray Cummings?

91-30

What Species? Immature Laughing Gull

How Many? 1

Location? Lake Rathbun Appanoose Co.

Type of Habitat? Lake and shore.

When? date(s): 6/4 & 6/5 1991

time 10:19am to 10:20.5am
9:30am to 9:35am

Others with you: None

Circumstance? I first saw this gull flying towards the dam and watched it go out of sight, but was unable to relocate on the 4th. On the 5th I relocated the Gull resting with several Caspian Terns and Ring-billed Gulls at the Island-veiw boat ramp.

Description: The flying bird was alone, but was a medium sized gull with long wings compared to the body size. The gull appeared dark gray brown overall, but a blackish or darker hood was noticeable from the top of the crown to the bill. The gull in flight had dark wings which were darker at the ends both on top and on the bottom. It also showed a white rump in flight. The setting gull was relocated on the 5th. It was about 350 yards away into the sun basically looking at a silhouette. It was noticeably smaller than Caspian Terns and Ring-billed Gulls setting 2 to 3 feet away. The gull had a long hooked beak. I wanted to get a better look at this bird so I drove around to the point, but 5 minutes later when I arrived about 12 of the maybe 18 birds had gone leaving only 6 Ring-billed Gulls.

Similar species: Of the medium sized Gulls only Ring-billed, Franklin's, and Mew Gulls have similar juvenile plumages. The direct size comparison, seen gull being smaller, bill shape and dark color, and lack of white in head eliminates Ring-billed Gull. Mew Gull is eliminated by long dark bill, Ring-billed like jist of bird in flight, and uniform overall color. The long down turned bill and the total improbablity of a juvenile Franklin's being in southern Iowa on this date.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? N/A

Viewing conditions: Good light at 200yds closest to 500yds on flying gull. Poor light at 350yds on setting gull.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen various plumages of Laughing Gull on the east coast and Florida. Numerous Ring-billed and Franklin's from Iowa and some Mew Gull in California.

References: National Geographic after sighting on the flying gull.

How long before field notes made? on sight this form completed? 5 months

9-29-91 Mississippi; Kite Not Documented
but seen at leisure ID positive
no daught what so ever