

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/22/00

Mew Gull
29 Nov 1996
Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA
*Stephen J. Dinsmore
IBL 67:22, 82, Dinsmore 1997

Record Number: 96-58
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:22

Records Committee: IBL 67:82

Dinsmore, S. J. 1997. Another Mew Gull at Saylorville
Reservoir. IBL 67:66.

VOTE: 7 A-D

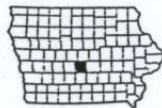
A-D, In my experience Mew Gulls always appear smaller than
Ring-billed Gulls; however, the rest of the description, except
for no mention of leg color, is entirely convincing.

A-D, Description is detailed, and considers effect of light on
mantle color; excellent study at some length (38 min).

ANOTHER MEW GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 29 November 1996, I observed an adult Mew Gull above the dam of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. I watched the bird from 4:03 to 4:41 p.m. as it rested on the ice with Ring-billed and Herring gulls. I was watching the gulls coming in to roost for the evening when I noticed a darker-mantled gull resting with several Ring-billed Gulls. The bird was preening, and I had to watch it for several minutes to be sure the dark-mantled appearance was not due to lighting. The bird was essentially the same size as a Ring-billed Gull, although it appeared slimmer. The mantle and upperwings were a shade darker gray, roughly the shade of those of a California Gull. The head was white with some light brown streaking on the nape and a few gray/brown flecks on the forehead. The eye was dark and stood out on the pale face. The bill was shorter and thinner than that of a Ring-billed Gull and was entirely yellow. The bill also had a more pointed appearance than the bill of a Ring-billed Gull. The small bill, seemingly large eye, and rounded head shape gave the bird a dainty appearance. The underparts and tail were white. Since the bird perched throughout the observation, the only glimpse I had of the wingtip was when the bird preened. When perched, the primaries were black with small white spots at the tips. On the spread wing, there was a large subterminal mirror on the outer primary (P10) and a slightly smaller subterminal mirror on the next primary (P9). The next several primaries had smaller white terminal spots and a small amount of black color separating the white from the dark gray upperwing. There was a broad white trailing edge to the upperwing. The underwing pattern was not studied. The wing, tail, and bill patterns indicate the bird was an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage. The lack of a subterminal ring on the bill and amount of white on the upperwing indicate the bird was of the expected North American race *Larus canus brachyrhynchus*.



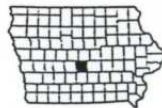
This is the fifth record of a Mew Gull in Iowa. Previous records were summarized by Dinsmore (*Iowa Bird Life* 65: 103-104, 1995) and included two first-basic, one second-basic, and one adult-basic bird. All of the Iowa records have occurred from late November through late December.

4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

LITTLE GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 27 October 1988 I was birding the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. At 3:30 p.m. I noticed a "different" gull feeding with several hundred Bonaparte's Gulls off Jester Park. At first I thought it was a Black-legged Kittiwake because of the black wing bar. However, the bird was much too small for a kittiwake. The bird was actively foraging over a large area of the lake and was difficult to approach. Finally, at about 4:15 p.m., I got within 200 yards of the bird. The bird was roughly the size of a Bonaparte's Gull. There was a prominent black bar across the back of each wing, extending from the base to the bend in the wing, then outwards to include the outer primaries. The rest of the upperwing and



96-58

mantle were white. The tail was square-tipped and white with a narrow black terminal band. The underwing and underparts were white. The head was white with a black spot behind the eye. The bill was short, slender, and dark. Leg color was not seen. Later, I noted that, in flight, the bird lacked the white "window" on the inner primaries and the dark trailing edge to the wing, features that all of the immature Bonaparte's Gulls had. Nowhere in my notes did I describe a dark cap on this bird. I don't recall seeing one, but that may have been because I saw the bird mostly in flight. Based on these features, I concluded the bird was a Little Gull in first-basic plumage. The wing pattern eliminated first-basic Bonaparte's Gull. First-basic Ross's Gull, not considered seriously at the time of the sighting, was eliminated by tail shape.

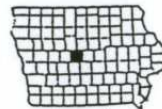
This bird was seen again on 1 November 1988 by Ann Johnson of Norwalk. This represents the first record of a Little Gull for Iowa. There have been four subsequent records of Little Gulls in Iowa. Those records are from April (2), October (2), and November (1).

4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

WILSON'S PHALAROPE NEST IN BOONE COUNTY

JAMES J. DINSMORE AND WILLIAM SCHUSTER

On 31 May 1996, while surveying wetland birds at the Harrier Marsh complex south of Ogden in Boone County, we flushed a male Wilson's Phalarope from a nest. The nest was on top of a small mound of vegetation amongst some short vegetation along a small marsh in the center portion of the complex. The nest contained four heavily marked dark brown eggs. We quickly left the nest and watched the male as it circled over the area and eventually landed near the nest. On our next visit to the area on 4 June, we could find no sign of the nest or the phalarope. On 8 June, Dinsmore searched the area thoroughly but could not find any sign of the nest nor was the adult seen. We assume that the eggs were taken by a predator.



On 19 June 1996, Dinsmore flushed a female Wilson's Phalarope from a recently seeded grassy field about 150 yards to the northwest of where the earlier nest was found. From about 7:15 to 7:45 a.m., the female circled over him, calling, and circled low over one section of the field. Dinsmore carefully searched this area but was not able to locate a nest although almost certainly, one was present. Presumably this female was the mate of the male seen earlier.

Although the Wilson's Phalarope was once a common nesting species of Iowa's wetlands, there have been few nesting records in recent years. The only recent specific nesting reports we are aware of were all in northern Iowa (*Birds in Iowa*, Kent and Dinsmore, 1996). This is the first confirmed report of nesting in central Iowa although this species undoubtedly nested in the area prior to settlement.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014 and 204 Oak Blvd., #107, Huxley, IA 50124

96-58

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Mew Gull
Number: 1 adult
Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA
Habitat: large reservoir
Date: 29 November 1996
Time: 4:03-4:41 p.m.
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014
Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I was watching the gulls coming in to roost for the evening when I noticed a darker-mantled gull resting with several Ring-billed Gulls. The bird was preening, and I had to watch it for a couple of minutes to be sure the mantle color was not an artifact of the light or viewing angle. The bird was essentially the same size as a Ring-billed Gull, though perhaps slightly slimmer-looking. The mantle and upperwings were a shade darker gray, roughly the shade of those of a California Gull. The head was white with some light brown streaking on the nape and a few gray/brown flecks on the forehead. The eye was dark and really stood out on the pale face. The bill was shorter and thinner than that of a Ring-billed Gull and was entirely yellow. The bill also had a more pointed appearance than the bill of a Ring-billed Gull. The small bill, seemingly large eye, and rounded head shape gave the bird a dainty appearance. The underparts and tail were white. Since the bird perched throughout the observation, the only glimpse I had of the wingtip was when the bird preened. When perched, the primaries were black with small white spots at the tips. On the spread wing, there was a large subterminal mirror on the outer primary (p10) and a slightly smaller subterminal mirror on the next primary (p9). The next several primaries had smaller white terminal spots and a small amount of black color separating the white from the dark gray upperwing. There was a broad white trailing edge to the upperwing. The underwing pattern was not studied. The wing, tail, and bill patterns indicate the bird was an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage. The lack of a subterminal ring on the bill and amount of white on the upperwing indicate the bird was of the expected North American race L. c. brachyrhynchus.

Similar species and how eliminated: The wing pattern, size, and lack of black marks on the face eliminated any of the smaller gulls (i.e. Bonaparte's). The small size and smaller bill size eliminated California Gull. Ring-billed Gull was eliminated on the basis of the darker mantle and upperwings, large, dark eye, and bill color and shape.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with overcast skies and light rain. Estimated viewing distance was 300-400m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous Mew Gulls in California, plus two others in Iowa. I have also seen single Mew (Common) Gulls in Massachusetts and North Carolina.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

96-58

Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written during observation
How long before this form completed: written 29 November 1996