

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Mew Gull  
21 Dec 1998  
Keokuk, Lee Co., IA  
Stephen J. Dinsmore

Record Number: 98-37  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 612 1/2 West Magnolia St., Fort Collins,  
CO [3/23/99]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:68  
Records Committee: IBL

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Even at long range and under poor conditions, important  
field marks well described.

A-D, First winter.

A-D, Not so well seen (great distance) and no documentation  
from other observers. Steve's sharp eyes and experience with this  
species lead me to believe that the observational details are  
reasonable.

98-37

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Mew Gull

Number: 1 first-basic

Location: Lock and Dam 19, Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa

Habitat: feeding below dam of a large river

Date: 21 December 1998

Time: 12:25-1:00 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 1/2 West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): Aaron Brees, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): I was scanning several hundred gulls feeding below the dam when a smaller, dark brown gull caught my eye. At my distance, the bird appeared similar to a Ring-billed Gull in size and shape. For most of the observation, the bird was foraging over the rough water below the dam, although it did briefly light on the water several times. The distance and strong winds precluded a careful study of the bird, but I did note several key features when I compared this bird to a first-basic Ring-billed Gull. The underparts were extensively washed with dark brown, unlike the very pale underparts of all nearby Ring-billed Gulls. The tail pattern also differed; rectrices were solidly dark brown, lacking the white bases seen on Ring-billed Gulls. My impression was of a dark tail and not of a pale tail with a narrow dark tail band like that of a Ring-billed Gull. The mantle was dark gray, and the bird could easily be picked out amongst the Ring-billed Gulls on the basis of this feature and the darker brown underparts. Although the distance was great, I noted on several occasions that this bird was smaller-billed than the surrounding Ring-billed Gulls. I could not see the color of the bill or legs. On the basis of these features, I concluded the bird was a Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) in first-basic plumage. In my judgement, the bird spent time foraging in both Iowa and Illinois. Admittedly, I think it spent most of its time in Illinois, but it clearly strayed over Iowa waters on at least a few occasions.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of a smaller bill, more extensive dark brown color on the underparts, darker gray mantle, and solidly dark rectrices eliminated the similar Ring-billed Gull.

Previous experience with species: I have seen at least five Mew Gulls in Iowa (including one a day earlier), 6 or 7 in Nebraska, and many on the West Coast in California and Oregon.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were fair with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was 400m.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 23 December 1998