

Laughing Gull
16 Jun 1997
Black Hawk Lake, Sac Co., IA
*Huser, *Rob Thelen, *Ernzen
IBL 67:124, 68:85

Record Number: 97-26
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Bill Huser (16 Jun), 140 Oakmont Dr., S. Sioux City, NE 68766
[*10/1/97]

Rob Thelen (16 Jun), 1744 Salinger, Carroll [10/1/97]

Peter Ernzen (17 Jun), 407 Court, Ida Grove 51445 [*10/1/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:124

Records Committee: IBL 68:85

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, One adult and one immature (possibly first-summer).
Direct comparisons with Franklin's Gulls helpful.

A-D, There is some inconsistency between reports as to adult
versus first-summer bird. It is unlikely there were two different
birds. However the leg color, wing and mantle color and black
primaries describe Laughing Gull.

A-D, Bill description does it for me, but I'm a little
confused. Were there two different birds? Sure sounds like it.
Split into two records.

Huser, Adult A-D. Ernzen and Thelen, 1 or 2 year old A-D.
Size, head and bill shape, wing tip projection should provide ID
with direct comparison of Franklin's.

A-D, Probably two birds, adult and subadult. Huser was at 60
meters with scope, so I doubt he could be wrong about all-black
hood and orange bill. Unfortunately, the tail on the immature
bird was not seen--it should have shown at least a partial tail
band.

A-D 6-16 ad., Key features seen on adult bird (Huser). A-D
6-16 to 6-18 subad., Key features seen on a subadult--dark bill,
primary extension (Thelen, Ernzen).

97-26

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For extraordinary bird sightings in X_IA, __NE or __SD

Species: Laughing Gull

Number seen: 1 ad.

Location: spoil area SE of Blackhawk Lake, Sac County, IA

Habitat: shallow water and sandflats

Date: 6/16/97

Time: 8 AM

duration >10 min.

Bill Huser 140 Oakmont Dr. S. Sioux City, NE 68776

Others with me: Jerry Probst, Sioux City

Others before/after me: none known

Description: a mostly white, black headed gull, intermediate in size to the accompanying Ring-billed and Franklin Gulls, perched at water's edge. The gull's head was marked with a black hood and carried an orange bill, larger than that of a Franklin Gull (direct comparison). The primaries were black and without white tips. The back was medium gray, darker than that of R.B.Gulls (direct comparison). The legs were black.

In flight, the dorsal extended wing showed gray wings and black primaries with no white primary tips or sub-terminal white bar. Both while in flight or perched, the bird appeared to be approximately one half the difference in size of the Franklin and Ring-billed Gulls.

Similar species & differentiation: the black head eliminated most gulls. Size, and other features, eliminated Little and Bonaparte's Gulls. Size, bill size, leg color and lack of white on primaries eliminated Franklin's Gulls. Common Black-headed Gulls were eliminated by the black, not brown, hood, black legs and lack of white on dorsal wing. Sabine's was eliminated by the bill color, size and lack of white on dorsal wing.

Disagreeing identifications: none

Conditions - light, distance & optics: Minolta 10X50 binocs, Kowa scope; direct, bright light from side, no heat distortion; 60 meters.

Previous experience with species: seen by thousands in VA, FL & TX

References: Nat'l Geo. F.G.

Notes taken, with bird in view X

Documented: 8/5/97

Bill Huser

What species? Laughin Gull How many? 1Location? Dodge Pond at SE Corner Blackhawk LAKEType of habitat? Settling pondWhen? date(s): 6-16-97 time: 11:00 AM ^{and} to 4:30 P.M.Who? your name and address: Rob Thelen 1744 Slinger Carroll 792-1793others with you: Noneothers before or after you: Pete Enzen 6-18-97

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

- size about 25% bigger than Franklins.
- larger bill that appeared to be dark
- partial hood
- Browner back than Franklins
- Dark Legs
- eye ring appeared to be split in half

This bird appeared to be a second year bird molting into an adult. or adult molting into winter

I later found out an adult was seen at this location the same day but I didn't see any adults

Similar species and how eliminated: Franklins. This bird had bigger size about 25% bigger bill, Browner back

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Sunny 200 YD - 250 YD. Est. Discovery scope
50 YD 7x42 Windriver Binog.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Franklins were present to compare
 References and persons consulted before writing description:
Pete Enzen, STUKES, Golden, + Audobon guides

How long before field notes made? 10 min this form completed? 5 days

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

PETER ERNZEN
407 COURT
IDA GROVE IA 51445

97-26

LAUGHING GULL

On the evening of June 17, I received a message from Rob Thelen that a Laughing Gull had been seen at the dredge/spoils pond at Black Hawk Lake. Unfortunately I was unable to look for the bird until the following afternoon.

I arrived at the pond shortly after 5 pm on June 18. I immediately noticed three distinct gull species. The first was the small Franklin's Gull the second was the larger Ring Billed Gull. The third was a bird slightly smaller (estimated 15% smaller) than the Ring Bills, but definitely larger (estimated 20% larger) than the Franklin's.

The bird in question was grayer on the back and on the wings than either of the two above mentioned species. It also had brownish tints in it. The primaries were all black - no hint of white in them at all. There was a partial light gray hood with a white forehead and white on the chin area. The hood appeared to be much less extensive and lighter than that of the Franklin's Gull. The bill was much larger and thicker than the Franklin's and black with a bulge on the lower mandible - 2/3 to 3/4 of the way down the mandible. The feet were black, while the rest of the bird was white.

I observed the bird for over twenty minutes and did not see it fly. I was unable to see the tail. The general impressions were that it was longer winged - wings projected further out behind the bird than on the Franklin's. When the bird walked it held its chest up and forward, giving it a large barrel chest appearance.

Though I have not seen a Laughing Gull before I convinced that this was what I saw. After consulting Advanced Birding by Kenn Kaufman I would place the bird as a first spring bird.