

California Gull

Record Number: 93-25

21 Nov 1993

Classification: A-P

Carter Lake, Pottawattamie Co., IA

*Silcock, *Bray, *Babs & Loren Padelford

P-0414, IBL 64:13, 68, Bray 1994

DOCUMENTATIONS

Ross Silcock (21 Nov), Box 300, Tabor 51653

Tanya E. Bray (21 Nov). 1107 Ironwood Ct., #186, Bellevue, NE 68005 [2/23/94]

Babs & Loren Padelford (23 Nov), 1405 Little John Rd., Bellevue, NE 68005

PHOTOGRAPGH

B. J. Rose (22 Nov), P-0414

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:13

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

Bray, T. E. 1994. California Gull at Carter Lake, Pottawattamie County. Iowa Bird Life 64:82-83.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Size compared to other gulls, eye color, leg color, and bill description clinch this one. I assume this species is under-reported in Iowa.

A-D, The bill color as described is diagnostic when supported by the other listed characters such as size, slightly darker mantle, and dark eye.

A-D, All of the necessary descriptors are convincing.

A-D, Bill, legs, eye, mantle well seen and described in detail. Winter adult.

REVOTE (with photo): 7 A-P

A-P, I think the photo is convincing, especially the leg color. I am concerned about the eye color. The copy of the photo shows what could be a pale eye, or simply a reflection. A pale eye would be inconsistent with this species -- it would also be inconsistent with the written descriptions. I request that the secretary review the original photo and see if he can resolve this.

A-P, The eye looks mostly dark and there is a hint of red beside the black gonys spot. Photo supports the documentations and other comments from reviewers.

December (Padelford and Padelford 1987). Two years later a Rock Wren was again observed by many from 8 to 28 November 1988 in the rip-rap along the Cherry Glen boat ramp at Saylorville Lake (Dinsmore 1989). On 17 September 1991 a surprised David Carlisle found two Rock Wrens in Red Oak. Although the birds were in his garage, he noted that suitable rocky habitat was nearby (Carlisle 1992). The Warren County bird was somewhat of an enigma since the Youngblut residence is on an acreage surrounded by some timber and heavily cultivated land. Perhaps the extensive railroads ties in their yard simulated the rocky areas typically used by Rock Wrens.

LITERATURE CITED

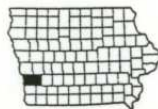
- Carlisle, D. 1992. Rock Wrens in Montgomery County. *Iowa Bird Life* 62:85.
 Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. *Iowa Birds*. Iowa State University Press, Ames. 356 pp.
 Dinsmore, S. J. 1989. Rock Wren at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 59:22.
 Fye, D., and H. Fye. 1987. Rock Wren at Cedar Rapids. *Iowa Bird Life* 57:61.
 Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Rock Wren in Woodbury County. *Iowa Bird Life* 54:37.
 Padelford, L., and B. Padelford. 1987. Rock Wren at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 57:62.

532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

CALIFORNIA GULL AT CARTER LAKE, POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

TANYA E. BRAY

On the morning of 21 November 1993, Jerry Toll called to inform me that he had seen a California Gull at Carter Lake near the Omaha airport. When I arrived, Jerry had the gull in view in his scope. It was swimming on the lake about 200 feet from us in company with approximately a dozen Ring-billed Gulls and a few Herring Gulls. At this distance, we could see that the California Gull was slightly larger than a Ring-billed Gull, definitely smaller than a Herring Gull, and with a mantle a shade darker than both. The bird swam and preened until a Bald Eagle flew over, and all the gulls lifted off the water. The California Gull flew toward us, and circled along the shoreline no more than 25 feet away. The wings and mantle were medium gray colored. The outer two primaries were black with fairly large square white spots near the tip. Both the inner and outer primaries had small white spots on the tips of the feathers. The head was white with some thin dark brown streaking on the crown, hindneck, and nape. This streaking was heavier and much more noticeable on the hindneck. Most importantly, the eye was dark, and the bill was very different from a Ring-billed Gull. It was long, more slender than a Herring Gull's bill, and was dull gray-yellow with a bright yellow tip. The lower mandible had a red spot near the gonys with a black rectangular-shaped spot on front of the red. A narrow strip of black extended from the black spot onto the upper mandible. Proximal to the black spot was a smudgy area of red-black. Toll described the legs as grayish in color. The bird flew up the shoreline, caught a fish, and ate it. It then flew behind an island in the lake and out of sight.



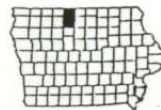
The size, eye color, bill shape and coloration, and mantle color clearly identified this bird as a winter-plumaged adult California Gull. The bird remained in the area until 23 November 1993, was seen by many observers, and was photographed by B. J. Rose (see cover). Carter Lake is an enclave of Iowa enclosed by Nebraska. The center of the lake is the state line; thus the eastern side of the lake is in Nebraska, and the western shore in Iowa! This is the fourth record for Iowa, and the first to be confirmed by photographic evidence. Previous records are an adult seen at Credit Island on 23 November 1989 (Petersen, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:121-122, 1991), an adult at Saylorville Reservoir on 8, 14-23 September, 11 October 1990 (Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 62:24-25, 1992), and a first-year bird at Coralville Reservoir on 27-28 October 1990 (Kent, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:123-124, 1991). This species is becoming increasingly common in western Nebraska and is to be expected more frequently in Iowa in the future.

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GLOSSY IBIS IN KOSSUTH COUNTY

MATTHEW KENNE

Both the Glossy Ibis of the Gulf and southeastern Atlantic Coasts and the White-faced Ibis of the West wander extensively; there are reports of Glossy Ibis from many locations in the West, and there is a White-faced Ibis breeding record from Iowa (Dinsmore and Dinsmore 1986). This tendency, coupled with the fact that the two species are very difficult to identify outside the breeding season, make any ibis seen in Iowa a challenge to identify. Several purported Glossy Ibis sightings have been considered by the I.O.U. Records Committee, but none have been accepted.



On 6 May 1992, I received a report that two ibis had been photographed the previous day at Union Slough N.W.R. in Kossuth County. I combed the area on 7 May but could not find the birds, nor were they seen there again. I then checked with the refuge headquarters, where I learned that Assistant Refuge Manager Bobbi Webber had photographed two ibis at the same location on 4 May. She had assumed the birds to be White-faced Ibis, rare birds on the refuge, but didn't document the sighting. I left a message asking if I could examine her slides when they were developed.

I then contacted David Bunkofske, an amateur nature photographer from Burt, Iowa about the photographs that he had taken on 5 May. He had recognized the birds as ibis, but had not identified them as to species. He agreed to show me the prints as soon as possible.

When I saw Bunkofske's photographs a week later, I was surprised to see two different looking adult ibis. In the best photo, one bird was obviously a White-faced Ibis; it had a red eye and face, a wide band of white feathers around the face (encircling the back of the eye), and bright red legs. The other bird was very interesting. What appeared to be a narrow band of light blue surrounded a facial area without red coloring. This bird looked like a Glossy Ibis.

I thought that the second bird was a Glossy Ibis but I first had some problems that needed to be addressed, not the least of which was my total lack of experience with Glossy Ibis. The photographs also presented a few problems. The bird's face was slightly in a shadow, and the bird itself was moving and slightly blurred in the

93-25



California Gull

P-0414

Carter L., Pottawattamie Co.

22 Nov 1993 B. J. Rose

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING IN IOWA

Species: California Gull
 Date: November 21, 1993 (2.15 pm for 20-30 seconds)
 Location: Carter Lake.
 Others: B.J. Rose (photos), Tanya Bray, Jerry Toll , et al.
 Weather: Calm; 55 degress F; light perfect- sun behind observer.
 Distance: Estimated 30 yards.

Narrative: Tanya Bray called me to tell me that she and Jerry Toll had found a California Gull at Carter Lake earlier in the day Sunday. I immediately went there to look for it. I did not find it where they had seen it, but noticed a group of 5 gulls resting on the south (Iowa) side at a park with extensive sandy areas. I drove there and got out of my car without realizing that I was only 30 yards from the birds. Four flushed, all Ring-bills, and one remained, which I identified as a California Gull.

Description: The bird which remained for about 20-30 seconds was observed through 10 X 50 binoculars at about 30 yards. It was slightly larger than the Ring-bills, but not noticeably so, and not noticeably darker in the mantle. However, its legs were fleshy rather than yellowish, its eye was dark, and the yellow bill had no noticeable gonys and a prominent dark spot near the distal end of the lower mandible. The nape was streaked with dark brown. The bird then flew, and circled to the north (into Iowa!). The absence of black at the distal end of the tail, and the presence (although limited compared to the Ring-bills) of white in the primaries, indicated that the bird was a winter adult.

Identification: The combination of dark eye, flesh-colored legs, and dark spot on the lower mandible eliminate adult winter Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, as well as other less likely possibilities among the white-headed, gray-mantled gulls. The peculiar fleshy washed-out color of the legs is particularly suggestive of California Gull. I could not see any red on the lower mandible, although another observer (Rose) was able to see this with his telescope when he saw the bird later (pers comm).

Comments: This is one of very few Iowa records (if accepted) for this species, although it has become common in western Nebraska at least into late December in recent years, where almost 50 have been counted at Lake McConaughy on the CBC there (pers obs).

Ross Silcock
 PO Box 300
 Tabor, IA 51653



22 November, 1993

There is a small possibility (from what I saw) that this was an aberrant Ring-billed Gull with no black on upper mandible & odd-colored legs. Unlikely - I would like to see Rose's photos.

California Gull (1 winter adult)

November 21, 1993

10:30 - 10:58 a.m.

Carter Lake, Pottawattamie County

Before me: Jerry Toll

With me: Jerry Toll

Description:

A medium sized gull, slightly larger than Ring-billed Gull and definitely smaller than Herring Gull, both in direct comparison. Bill long and more slender than Herring Gull; dull gray-yellow distally, bright yellow at the tip. Lower manible had red spot near gonys with a black rectangular shaped spot immediately preceding red toward the tip; a narrow strip of black extended from this spot onto the upper manible. Proximal to the black spot was a smudgy area of red-black. Eye was black. Head white with thin dark brown streaking on the crown and nape; heavier and very noticeable on the hindneck. Mantle medium gray, slightly darker than both Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. Mantle color was easiest to see when different species were in the scope at the same time, but was difficult to distinguish with binoculars at any distance. Outer two primaries were mostly black with squarish white spots; smaller white spots on the tips of both inner and outer primaries. The leading edge of the marginal wing coverts showed light when the bird was flying directly toward me. White trailing edge to wings. Leg color not seen by me but Toll described it as grayish. Tail white.

Behavior: Bird swam in company of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, preening and sleeping for some time. Then all gulls flew when Bald Eagle flew over. California Gull flew towards us and landed at edge of shoreline less than 25 feet away (really!). Flew up shoreline, caught fish, and ate it near shore. Flew behind island and out of sight.

Similar species: Both Ring-billed and Herring Gulls are eliminated by bill coloration, size, slightly darker mantle, and eye color. Western, Lesser-black backed would be darker mantled, different bill coloration.

Equipment: 25x scope, 7 x 26 binoculars.

Light: Sunny clear morning. Light behind us. Excellent viewing conditions.
Distance: 25 feet at closest(This is in Nebraska); 200 feet when bird was swimming (This is in Iowa.)

Books consulted: National Geographic, and Audubon Master Guide when bird was in view; Later Grant's Gulls.

Notes made with bird in view. This documentation written 24 hours later.

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Babs & Loren Padelford
1405 Little John Rd.
Bellevue, NE 68005

Documentation for California Gull

Location: Carter Lake, Pottawattamie County, Iowa

Date: 23 November 1993 Time: 9:45-11:30 am

Weather Conditions: Overcast, windy, 30 degrees

Description of bird: An adult California Gull in winter plumage was seen sitting on a beach in close proximity to adult Ring-billed Gulls and an adult Herring Gull. The white head seemed more round than either the Ring-billed or Herring Gulls. The iris was dark. The nape of the neck was white with brownish speckling. The nape was not as heavily speckled as the Herring Gull and more speckled than the Ring-billed gulls. The mantle was noticeably darker gray than either Herring or Ring-billed Gulls. The legs were a greenish-gray and appeared to be about the same color as the Ring-billed Gulls' legs. The bill was slightly larger than the Ring-billed, and was yellow with a black spot near the end of the lower mandible that extended slightly onto the upper mandible. A red spot merged with the black spot. Overall size of the bird was quite a bit smaller than the Herring Gull, and slightly larger than Ring-billed Gull. In flight it could be found by the darker mantle, the appearance of long, slender wings and a pale gray bar next to a white trailing edge on the ventral side of the inner wing.

Behavior of bird: When first observed it flew to a beach by itself and started eating a large fish. In a few minutes two Herring Gulls chased it and took the fish. It then flew around the east side of the lake, at times quite high. It finally landed on a public beach and joined a small mixed flock of gulls. It then sat on the beach preening and then sleeping.

Distance from bird: Sixty yards at closest point.

Optical equipment: 25X Bushnell Spacemaster spotting scope.

This documentation is being written at 4:30 p.m. on November 23rd from notes taken at the time of sighting.