

Thayer's Gull  
14 Mar 1991  
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA  
\*Ann Johnson, \*Diane Porter  
IBL 61:93, 62:70

Record Number: 91-14  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Ann Johnson, 14 Mar, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211  
Diane C. Porter, 15 Mar, 908 E. Briggs Ave., Fairfield, IA  
51556

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:93  
Records Committee: IBL 62:70

VOTE: 7-A-D

A-D, good supporting details.

A-D, Adequately distinguished from Herring and Iceland Gulls.

A-D, Acceptably described. I had some reservations about the description of the tail band as "chocolate brown." From my limited experience with this species, the tail band is only slightly darker than the bird's overall color, which is light brown. However, a photo in Grant shows Thayer's with a pretty dark tail band, and all other observations supported the identification.

A-D, Good description of first winter Thayer's Gull.

A-D, Fairly complete details by Johnson, less by Porter. What about secondary bar? Why didn't other observers document these birds?

A-D, Good study by Johnson pointing out combination of field marks for this species. Coloration sounds good, along with uniform body color, underwing primary color and effect, bill and head structure as compared to Herring, chocolate brown tail band. All combine to make a Thayer's Gull the correct conclusion.

A-D, Ann's details were good to describe Thayer's Gulls.

91-14

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Thayer's Gull - first winter (Two individuals)

Location: Below dam, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

Habitat: Gravel bar and open river

Date: 14 March 1991

Time: 10:20 to 10:40 am

one individual seen on 15 March, two on 16 March, and one on 17 March

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Tim Schantz, Diane Porter

Description of bird: These gulls both came into view in my scope as I watched the Iceland Gull. They were basically the same size and structure as the Iceland; i.e., smaller than Herrings and larger than Ring-billeds with rounder heads and thinner, less bulbous bills. The birds were basically a uniform creamy brown to buff from above with chocolate brown edges to the outer primaries. The mantle and wing coverts had some lighter feather edgings which gave the bird a scaly effect. The chocolate brown tail band on each bird was seen briefly as they sparred over a fish. The head of one bird was a bit lighter than the mantle but the other was very nearly the same color. The bill was all black on one and black with a bit of lightening at the base of the other. The legs were pink and the eye was dark. From below as they came in and landed, the birds showed light, colorless and translucent flight feathers with contrasting darker wing linings, the characteristic used initially for identification.

Similar species and how eliminated: Herring Gull was eliminated by the light and uniform body color, brown as opposed to blackish primaries and tail band, bill and head structure, and lack of any color to the underside of the primaries. Iceland Gull was eliminated based on the darker secondaries and wide, brown tail band.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Viewed in clear skies through scope at about 25X at a distance of an estimated 250 feet.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have observed several Thayer's Gulls in the past few years and have had several opportunities recently to compare Thayer's with Herrings.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Description dictated during observation. No references consulted.

How long before field notes made? during observation How long before this form completed? Three days

Record No. 1457

## Documentation of Iowa Sighting

4 Ltr Code THGU

NGS-152 / G-144 / PE-86 / AMG(II)-60 / BH-168

91-14

First Name	Thayer's			Notes
Last Name	Gull (first winter)			
Sci Name	Larus thayeri			
How many?	2	Date	3/15/91	
City		St/Prov	IA	
Co.	Marion	Nation	USA	
Place Code	RED	Red Rock Reservoir		
Hab. Code	R	River		
St. Life List	Yes	N.A. Life List		
Flag 1	Yes	Flag 2	Yes	

Description from my notes, made while bird was in view. Parts in parentheses are being added from memory as I write this report on 3/23/91.

(On the gravel bar below the dam at Red Rock was a large assembly of gulls: mostly ring-billed, a few herring, an Iceland, and two first-winter Thayer's.)

(The Thayer's gulls were) larger than the ring-bills and approximately the same size as the herrings. (It was hard to pick them out except in flight. Then the) evenly-brown plumage (was noticeably different from the herring gulls.) Primaries (were the) lightest part, almost white from below. However, viewed from above, (each) primary (was) two-toned, with the outer vane darker than the inner vane. The gulls had dark eyes.

## Viewing conditions, etc.

I watched the gull for about an hour in the late afternoon. It's hard to judge the distance, but it was on a gravel bar near the north bank of the dam's tail waters, and I was on the bank. It was close enough to see the details easily.

Equipment: Leica 10X40 binocs; Kowa scope. Lighting: bright but overcast, then becoming dusk.

Other observers: Ann Johnson, Beth Brown, Tim Schantz. We all agreed that these were Thayer's gulls. Standard field guides and P. J. Grant's Gulls ID book were consulted before, during, and after viewing the gulls. I am grateful to Ann Johnson for pointing out to me the two-toned character of the primaries.