

94-49

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Number: 1 adult (fourth-winter)  
Location: below Red Rock Reservoir dam, Marion Co., IA  
Habitat: spillway below dam  
Date: 11 December 1994 (also 17 December)  
Time: 7:50-8:25 a.m.  
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014  
Others who saw bird: Jim Sinclair, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): We were scanning a small flock of Ring-billed Gulls resting on an island below the dam when we observed a larger, darker mantled gull that I immediately recognized as an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. The bird was noticeably larger than a Ring-bill, but smaller and slimmer than nearby Herring Gulls. The mantle was dark charcoal gray, clearly darker than any of the other gulls present. The head was white with very dark brown streaking, especially on the nape. The eye was yellow. The bill was also yellow with a red smudge near the tip. The underparts were white. In flight, the black primaries contrasted with the dark gray innerwing and mantle.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, mantle color, yellow eyes, and yellow legs eliminated other larids, especially California, Herring, and Great Black-backed Gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 35-40 meters. I used 8x40 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Very familiar with this species from recent birding in North Carolina, where I have seen >20 in a day. Have also seen several in Iowa and Massachusetts, plus a single bird in Nebraska.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America  
Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: none made

How long before this form completed: written 19 December 1994

94-49

**DOCUMENTATION FORM  
UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS IN IOWA**

**Species:** Lesser Black-backed Gull - winter adult

**Location:** Whitebreast Point, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

**Habitat:** Sitting on edge of ice

**Date:** 17 December, 1994 **Time:** 10:10 to 10:20

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

**Other Observers:** None at the time. Had been discovered the previous weekend, and was seen several times later this day by Steve Dinsmore and Gordon Brown.

**Description of bird:** White-headed, dark backed gull. Had yellow bill with no dark ring evident and yellow legs. The head had some streaking on it. The bird was sitting on the ice by itself, so there were no other gulls near-by for size comparison. It had much the same look as a Ring-billed with bad lighting, and it took some time before the bird turned enough to see that the mantle and wings were a definite slate gray.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** Dark mantle eliminated all but Great Black-backed and Slaty-backed. Yellow legs clinched ID (in addition to not being as massive as Great Black-backed).

**Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics):** Sunny, with light playing tricks with mantle color on several gulls. It was only when the bird walked around some so that the lighting varied that I could be sure it was a legitimate dark-mantled gull. Observed at about 500 yards (or perhaps a bit more) through zoom scope.

**Previous experience:** First adult I've ever seen.

**References consulted during observation:** none

**References consulted before completing documentation:** none

**Field notes made:** during observation

**Documentation completed:** On return home

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

94-49

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Adult winter) Number: 1

Location: Bedrock Reservoir, Marion Co.

Observer: Ray Cummins 609 S. Main Street Centerville, IA.

Others before/with/after: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 12/21/94 Time Bird Seen: 10:00AM to 10:10AM

Habitant & circumstances: Located on an ice shelf above the dam where about 2000 gulls mostly Ring-billed were setting. The bird was located setting alone on the left edge of the group.

Description: The bird was slightly smaller than the Herring gulls present. The gull was easy to locate as it was a typical adult winter Lesser Black-backed. It had a much darker back and wings than any other gulls present. It had a yellow bill with red mark. The neck, nape, and crown were heavily streaked with dark marks. The legs were yellow the same color as the adult ring-billed.

Description of voice: N/H.

Similarly appearing species: The gull was too small for Yellow-footed. The size and yellow legs eliminated all other possible black backed gulls.

Distance (how measured): estimated 150yds

Optical equipment: Kowa 20x to 60x Spotting Scope.

Light: sunny excellent light.

Previous experience with species:

Anyone have reservations?: no.

Books and references: none

Time of field notes: none . Final typing: 16 days

Signature: Raymond L. Cummins Address: 609 S. Main St.

Date: 01-14-94

Centerville, Ia. 52544

Lesser Black-backed Gull  
11 Dec 1994  
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA  
\*S. Dinsmore, \*A. Johnson  
IBL 65:42, 49, 82

Record Number: 94-49  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steven J. Dinsmore, 11, 17 Dec, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [6/26/95]  
Ann Johnson, 17 Dec, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211  
Ray Cummins, 21 Dec, 609 S. Main St., Centerville 52544

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:42, 49  
Records Committee: IBL 65:82

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Good description of easily-identified age class.