

Iceland Gull  
19 Mar 1997  
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA  
\*Aaron Brees  
P-0545, IBL 67:88, 68:86, Brees 1998

Record Number: 97-09  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Aaron Brees, 219 S. Franklin, Corydon 50060 [\*10/1/97]

PHOTOGRAPHS

Aaron Brees, P-0545

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:88

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

Brees, A. E. 1998. Iceland Gull at Red Rock Reservoir. IBL  
68:65

VOTE: 2 A-P, 3 A-D, 2 NA

A-D, Photographs not diagnostic.

NA, I believe this was an Iceland Gull. Even though the photos are at a distance, combined with the sketch they show a bird with the structure of an Iceland. However, because we have so little information on this species in the state, an acceptable record should include the primary extension compared with more common gulls. The other troublesome factor is the appearance of all white primaries and tail (evident in photos). Any interior Iceland should be of the Kumlein's race and not be pure white. The nominate race would be unprecedented. Or would a spring bird be worn enough that its appearance might change. I'm honestly not sure.

A-P, Although there should be a faint tail band and some darkness in the wing tips, a spring bird could be bleached or these details may have been hard to see. Size, bill, and all-white appearance are adequate to eliminate Glaucous and Thayer's.

A-D, Description is consistent with Iceland Gull (except maybe it should be larger than Ring-billed Gull). Photo is not diagnostic, I think I found the bird in question (photo is too washed out to tell much about it).

NA, I have 2 major problems, even though documentation is careful. Photos are poor and not helpful. (1) Primary extension (not seen) is extremely important in separation from very small Glaucous Gulls (see attached info) as is flight characteristics and overall jizz. (2) The possibility of 'barrovianus' beginning to be recognized. See details on bird in Lancaster Co., NE and note difficulties on West Coast. 'Dipped in ink' bill may not be characteristic of 'barrovianus' Glaucous Gull, although details in bill coloration of barrovianus are not well known. Also the "white" wings are suggestive of Glaucous. 'Kumlein's' Iceland Gull does not have immaculate primaries.

RE-VOTE (by mail): 1 A-P, 3 A-D, 3 NA

A-D, The considerably smaller size compared to nearby Herring

97-09

Gulls, and the relatively short, thin, black bill are indicative of Iceland Gull. Lack of any color on wingtips and tail may have been due to viewing conditions.

NA, I stand by my need to have primary projection information and await seeing the original photo.

NA, In light of information new to me on small Glaucous Gulls, the bird would seem (if not likely, at least very probably) a Glaucous Gull. The very definition of reasonable doubt.

A-P, I agree with the information on small Glaucous Gulls, but I don't believe it applies to this bird. The Red Rock bird is just barely larger than Ring-billed Gull, has a small thin bill, and has a mostly black bill. These features eliminate a small Glaucous Gull. I think this bird was bleached by the winter sun and is at the opposite extreme of a Thayer's. The original photos are better than the copies.

NA, Failure to note primary projection is fatal, considering the "white wings". This does not eliminate the possibility of a small Glaucous Gull.

RE-VOTE (at meeting of 20 Sep 1997 with original photos and comments from second review): 2 A-P, 5 A-D.

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**White-winged Crossbill:** Easily, this was the invasion species of the season. It was reported from about 37 locations, all in the northern two-thirds of the state. High counts included 20-50 on 23-24 Jan at Fairmount Cemetery in Davenport (JLF), 38 on 5 Jan at Sioux City (BFH), 37 on 31 Dec at LeMars in Plymouth Co. (SJD), 35 on 27 Dec. at Sheldon in O'Brien Co. (Gordon Brown fide SJD, JV), 26 on 13 Dec in Dickinson Co. (LAS), 25 on 13 Feb at Muscatine (JU, THK), and 25 on 6 Dec at Arnold's Park Cemetery in Dickinson Co. (ET). This species was also reported on 9 CBCs.

**Common Redpoll:** A good year with reports from about 15 locations, numbers ranged up to 110 during February at Red Rock Res. (AB, AMJ, JLF, CE). Other high counts were 60 on 18 Dec at Union Slough N.W.R. (MCK), 40 on 2 Dec north of Pleasantville in Marion Co. (AB), and 35 on 13 Dec in Dickinson Co. (LAS). 116 were reported on the Saylorville CBC (RRe, MJ).

**Pine Siskin:** Reported from about 11 locations statewide. The most were 35 on 8 Dec in Des Moines (PJW), 30 during December-January near Missouri Valley in Harrison Co. (RRe), 26 on 11 Jan at the State Forest Nursery in Ames (MJ), 24 during December-January at another Ames location (Dave Edwards fide HZ), and 20 on 2 Dec at the Iowa Falls Cemetery in Hardin Co. (MPR). There were more reports than last year, but still much less common than normal.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 1 was reported on 20 Dec at the Cherokee CBC.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** The usual birds were found at Tama Road in Des Moines Co. (AB), and Sampson Road in Muscatine Co. (PHA, RIA, THK). 25 were found on the Keokuk CBC under the Des Moines R. bridge to Missouri (RIC).

## COMMENT

Everyone was extremely prompt in getting their reports in, which makes life much more pleasant for field reports editors. I was pleased to receive a first report from Mike Overton of Ames and hope this will be the first of many from him. Overall, I received reports from 34 observers which, when transcribed, involved 30 typed pages of data. A year's experience at this has been a big help to me; not only have I improved my efficiency, but I hope I have greatly reduced the errors and omissions that I know I committed last year.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Pam H. Allen (PHA), West Des Moines; Reid I. Allen (RIA), West Des Moines; Neil Bernstein (NBe), Cedar Rapids; Dick Bierman (DBi), Cherokee; Aaron Brees (AB), Cherokee; Mani Bunnimit (MBu), Omaha, NE; Dennis Carter (DCe), Decorah; Robert I. Cecil (RIC), Des Moines; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Ft. Collins, CO.; Chris Edwards (CE), North Liberty; Peter Erzen (PE), Ida Grove; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Jacob T. Gilliam (JTG), Norwalk; Robert Gruenewald (RGr), Sanborn; William F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City, NE.; Maridel Jackson (MJ), Ankeny; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Jack Jones (JJo), Sioux City; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Curt Nelson (CuN), Mason City; Michael D. Overton (MO), Ames; Babs K. Paddleford (BKP), Bellevue, NE.; Loren J. Paddleford (LJP), Bellevue NE.; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscumb; Mark Proescholdt (MPR), Liscumb; Russell Reisz (RRe), Missouri Valley; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; \*Brian L. Smith, (BLS), Rockwell City; Ed Thelen (ET), Spirit Lake; Dennis Thompson (DT), Johnston; \*Richard Trieff, Indianola; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; Hank Zaletel (HZ), Nevada.

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## ICELAND GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

AARON E. BREES

On the afternoon of 19 March 1997, I stopped below Red Rock Dam in Marion County, where a large flock of gulls had gathered on some exposed gravel bars. Among the numerous Herring and Ring-billed gulls, I noticed an extremely pale, medium-sized gull. I quickly took several photographs of the bird as well as taking notes and making a field sketch.

The bird was similar in size to the Ring-billed Gulls except that it was slightly taller and bulkier. It was much smaller and more lightly built than any of the Herring Gulls. The bird's head was very rounded with dark eyes. The bill was short and thin and appeared all black at a distance. A closer view showed that the basal two thirds was actually very dark grey, while the tip was black. The most striking feature of the bird was that its plumage appeared to be entirely white. After studying the bird more closely, I was able to see some dark barring on the undertail coverts and some lighter, faded barring on the upperwing coverts. At one point, a passing Bald Eagle flushed the gull flock, providing a view of the bird in flight. This allowed me to confirm that the tail, rump, and wings were white and unmarked.

After observing the bird for a while, I decided that it was a first-year Iceland Gull. The bill structure and color along with the small size of the bird eliminated first-year Glaucous Gull as a possibility. The extensive white coloration of the bird eliminated first-year Herring Gull as well as first-year Thayer's Gull.

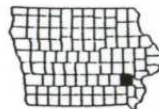
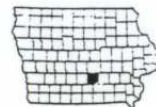
On 21 March, I returned to Red Rock but was unable to relocate the bird. There were very few gulls present anywhere on the lake and it appeared that the majority of the birds had left the area. This bird represents the second record for Red Rock and the tenth and latest spring record of Iceland Gull for Iowa (Kent and Dinsmore, *Birds in Iowa*, 1997).

219 South Franklin Street, Corydon, IA 50060

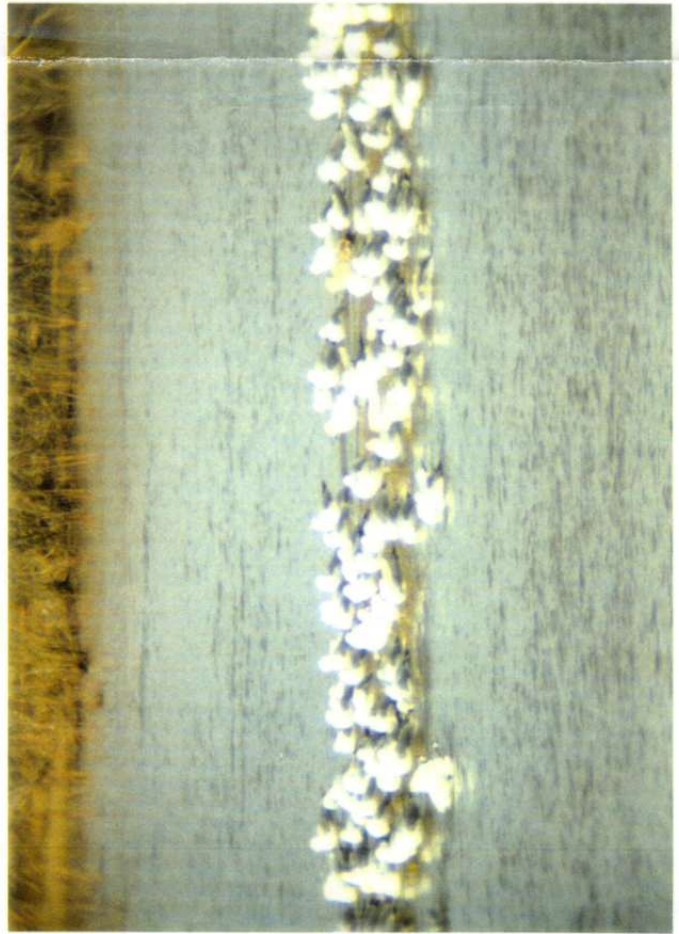
## ANHINGA AT LAKE DARLING STATE PARK

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 17 September 1996 I was birding at Lake Darling State Park in Washington County. I was walking along the east shore of the lake when I noticed that several Broad-winged Hawks kettling overhead. Every minute or two I glanced up, until the kettle contained nine birds. When I next glanced up at 4:42 p.m., I saw another single bird that I initially assumed would be another hawk. When I put my binoculars on it, I noted the long, fairly broad, pointed wings, long, skinny neck, and very long tail. Within a couple of seconds, I recognized the silhouette as that of an Anhinga, even though the bird was soaring at an estimated height of 500 meters. Because of the great distance, I was not able to see many details of the bird's plumage. However, there was a line of contrast on the breast, separating the bird's dark belly from a paler neck and upper breast. I watched the bird until 4:50 p.m. and noted the following. Throughout the observation, the bird soared lazily towards the southwest, eventually joining the kettle of Broad-winged Hawks. While soaring, the bird occasionally gave a couple of shallow wingbeats. The bird's



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19 Mar 1997 Aaron Brees

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD IN NEBRASKA

Acc # 394 97-09

Species: GLAUCOUS GULL (1; 1st winter)  
 Date: December 5 and 7, 1996  
 Location: Branched Oak SRA, Lancaster County  
 Observer: Ross Silcock  
 Other Observers: Babs and Loren Padelford, John Sullivan on Dec. 5th, Joel Jorgensen on Dec 7th.

\* This bird also reported  
 as Iceland Gull (see  
 Acc # 603)

Viewing, optical: On 5th, at 3:30-4:30 p.m., looking se from Marina area, light excellent, overcast, diffuse light; on 7th, at 7:30-8:30 a.m. looking w from parking area at n end of dam, sunny, excellent light, too cool for heat distortion. Both dates using Balscope SR 25X scope and Optolyth 10 X 50 binoculars at about 100-200 yards distance; seen in flight, standing on ice, and swimming.

## Narrative:

A possible Iceland Gull I had been reported present on Dec. 2 at this location, and I wanted to see it and had a chance to do so Dec. 5. When I arrived at the Marina area I immediately noted with my binoculars a 1st winter Thayer's Gull, a 1st winter Glaucous Gull, and what I took to be a 1st Winter Iceland Gull. About to recheck with my scope, I realized that Padelfords were nearby and they indicated that there was some question about the identification of this "Iceland Gull"; it was suggested that it might be a small Glaucous Gull. On the evening of the 5th I spoke to Joel Jorgensen and he indicated that he had thought the bird was a Glaucous Gull. I then proceeded to scope the bird while it was swimming and standing at the edge of a "puddle" of open water in the frozen area at the north end of the dam near the Marina.

On the 7th, with Joel Jorgensen, I was able to scope the bird carefully with excellent light and observe it in flight as it moved sw along the ice edge to another gull roost; while doing this it was adjacent to 2 1st winter Thayer's Gulls, allowing excellent direct comparison of "jizz" while both species were in flight near each other.

## Features Seen:

Direct comparison with an obvious 1st winter Glaucous Gull which was adjacent at times showed that the bird question was much smaller; indeed, it was about the size of Herring gulls that it occasionally was adjacent to. At one point, it stood on the ice next to a 2nd winter Herring, and was about the same size, possibly slightly smaller, and of about the same bulk. Plumage was apparently identical with the larger Glaucous Gull, and primary extension beyond the tail looked similar to that of the larger Glaucous Gull. The head shape, however was somewhat more rounded than the flatter look of the larger Glaucous. The bill was not large, nor small, and had a reduced gonys by comparison with the larger Glaucous Gull present; its size and shape were of little use to me in identification. Both birds had immaculate primary tips; no color could be discerned either at rest or in flight. The bill of the larger bird was typical, in that the distal third was black, sharply demarcated from the basal two-thirds, which was flesh-colored. The smaller bird, however, although it had a bicolored bill, it was about 50% yellowish-horn and 50% blackish, the two colors only diffusely demarcated. In flight, both birds appeared similar in bulk, wing length relative to body length, and breadth of wing at the body.

retyped  
 from original  
 MAB

Identification:

After some consideration, discussion with Padelfords and Jorgensen, checking the literature after the Dec. 5 sighting, and rechecking the bird itself on Dec. 7, I concluded that it was indeed a very small Glaucous Gull, possibly a female of the Alaskan race, barrovianus. This conclusion was based mainly on the short primary extension past the tail tip, the complete absence of coloration in the primary tips, and the general shape/jizz of the bird, similar to the larger Glaucous present. On Dec. 7 I was able to compare the bird directly with adjacent 1st winter Thayer's Gulls, and it was noticeably "hefty" in comparison, looking shorter-winged relative to the body and its wings were broader-based at the body. Most, if not all, North American Iceland Gulls are of the race kumlieni (Zimmer, Birding 23:254, 1991), and these birds rarely have immaculate primary tips. Problems with this identification are the very small size for a Glaucous Gull and the bill coloration, bicolored with a diffuse demarcation rather than the "dipped-in-ink" bicolored bill of a typical 1st winter Glaucous. There is no information in the literature that I have seen regarding the bill color of barrovianus, but these birds may be as small as a large Herring gull; indeed, there has been much controversy about identifications of Iceland Gull in California, where it is thought by some that such birds are in fact barrovianus Glaucous Gulls (Zimmer). If barrovianus has bill coloration as noted in this bird, and can indeed be as small as a Herring Gull, then the identification as Glaucous seems secure.

On the other hand, a case can be made that this bird was an Iceland, although major problems revolve around the bicolored bill and short primary projection, and the large size and "hefty jizz". If this bird was in fact finishing its molt into 2nd winter plumage, it would have a bicolored bill as seen, and may have a short primary extension due to incomplete growth of the fresh primaries. One might expect some gray feathering in the mantle and some lightness to the eyes at this age, and neither was noted, but 2nd winter Iceland may not necessarily show these features (Zimmer; Kaufman, Advanced Birding 1990), especially, presumably, if molt into this plumage is not complete. I believe, however, that the "jizz" of the bird, especially its similar shape to the larger Glaucous present and comparison in flight with Thayer's present, reduces the likelihood that this was an Iceland to near zero.

Comments:

The precedent for occurrence of barrovianus in the interior is sketchy. It may occur rarely, but essentially only on the western Great Plains. Bailey and Neidrach (Pictorial Checklist of Birds of Colorado, 1967) listed barrovianus as the race of Glaucous Gull occurring in Colorado; 2 specimens were cited. Pulitch (Birds of North Central Texas, 1988) noted that a specimen collected along the Red River at the boundary of Oklahoma and Clay Co, Texas, 17 Dec. 1880 was an intergrade of hyperboreus and barrovianus, perhaps a logical expectation on the Great Plains, as the breeding ranges of the two subspecies meet on the in nw Canada coast (Godfrey, Birds of Canada, 1979). To the east, however, Bohlen (Birds of Illinois, 1989) considered all Illinois Glaucous Gulls to be of the nominate race hyperboreus.

Ross Silcock  
 PO Box 300  
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Dec 7, 1996

Date: Tue, 31 Dec 1996 13:17:12 -0700  
From: Paul Lehman  
Subject: Re: [BIRDWG01] Barrovianus Glaucous Gull  
X-Mailer: Windows Eudora Version 1.4.4  
Content-type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"  
Content-transfer-encoding: 7BIT

Joel:

Size and structure are the main differences I've seen with assumed barrovianus Glaucous on the West Coast: (I am only talking first-winter birds here.) Perhaps some show a bit more dusky along the cutting edge of the bill as well, but I don't know if this is at all a real average difference or not. There certainly is a difference between North American Glaucous Gulls and European ones, the latter of which first-winters are much more heavily marked about the body with tan checkering. Our first winters are usually (but not always) paler, with more limited checkering; thus the mis-aging by many birders of such first-years as second-years.

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# GLEANINGS FROM TECHNICAL LITERATURE

Paul A. DeBenedictis

In this Gleanings we take a look at the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus* ssp) complex from an European perspective, review the subspecies of the Glaucous Gull (*L. hyperboreus*) and, depending on whether or not you've seen it, get some disquieting news on Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*) from Canadian researchers.

## Herring Gull Complex

The large gulls related to the Herring Gull remain one of the most taxonomically difficult groups of birds. In North America one can point to hybridizing populations and argue that Western (*L. occidentalis*), Glaucous-winged (*L. glaucescens*), Herring, and Glaucous Gull are races of a single species (although the latter two do overlap slightly in parts of arctic Canada). The California (*L. californica*), Iceland (*L. glaucoides*), and Great Black-backed (*L. marinus*) Gulls are more distinct members of this complex. In the Palearctic, overlapping but extensively hybridizing populations of Herring and Glaucous Gulls occur in Iceland, and minimal overlap with at least some intermixing, as in Canada, also occurs in Scandinavia. Palearctic Herring Gulls are extremely variable in mantle, eye ring, and leg color, and several races have been named. The yellow-legged races often are treated as a separate

species or are combined with Lesser Black-backed Gull (*L. fuscus*). In Siberia, Slaty-backed (*L. schistagus*) and Herring Gulls hybridize where they come into contact, adding another member to the complex. In short, gulls are just as difficult in the Old World as they are in the New!

Two recent overviews of these birds summarize the European perspective, which is just as varied as are the birds. The treatment of this complex in Cramp & Simmon's *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa* (vol. 3, 1983, Oxford University Press) is conservative and mostly follows the arrangement advocated by Charles Vaurie's *Birds of the Palearctic Fauna, non-passerines* (Oxford University Press, 1965). Three species are recognized in the western Palearctic: Herring, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed Gull. The Slaty-backed Gull is mentioned only casually. The Herring Gull is divided into three groups of subspecies: the pale-backed, pink-footed birds of northern Europe, North America, and Siberia (*argentatus* group); the (usually) yellow-legged birds of southern Europe and central Asia (*cachinnans* group); and an odd form from the Armenian Highlands that resembles the California Gull in many traits. The dark-mantled, yellow footed gull

populations (*heuglini* and *taimyrensis*) from the northwestern Soviet Union are treated as races of Lesser Black-backed Gull rather than Herring Gull, where Vaurie and others had placed them, even though they apparently hybridize with the Siberian form of pink-footed Herring (or Vega) Gull, *Larus argentatus vegae*. The *Handbook* does a better job of summarizing the biology than the taxonomy of these birds, which probably is appropriate. There are, however, several notes which suggest that one or more of the forms of Herring Gull actually may be distinct species.

Volume 8 of the *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas* (Glutz von Blotzheim and Bauer, 1982, Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, Wiesbaden, in German) covers the gulls and appeared at almost the same time as the *Handbook*. The *Handbuch* contains a detailed taxonomic review by J. Haffer, who recognizes seven super-species and fourteen species of large gulls in the northern hemisphere. California and Great Black-backed Gulls are relatively distinct; both overlap but seldom hybridize with the Herring Gull. The Western, Glaucous-winged, and Yellow-footed (*L. livens*) Gulls form a superspecies, as do Iceland and Thayer's Gull. The Glaucous Gull stands by itself, but Herring, Vega (treated as a distinct species, *L. vegae*), and Slaty-backed Gulls form a super-species distinct from the Yellow-legged and Armenian Gulls. Haffer also includes the dark-mantled races of northwestern Russia in the Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L. fuscus*, but notes that interactions between them and Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull forms

are poorly and sometimes contradictorily described. Finally, the Yellow-legged Gull, *L. cachinnans*, and the Armenian Gull, *L. armenicus*, are recognized as a seventh superspecies. The breeding range of the Yellow-legged Gull has been expanding rapidly northwestward in recent decades, and it now overlaps both Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gull in Brittany, where it is maintaining its identity. It seems to be a valid species, and recently Spanish populations have been shown to be behaviorally distinct from other European populations, so *cachinnans* may consist of more than one species. Probably the only reason the Armenian Gull has not been recognized as a species earlier is that it has been poorly known until recently.

Why worry about the European perspective? The common Herring Gull of the Aleutians is the Vega Gull, at least two specimens allocated to the northwest Russian populations of Lesser Black-backed (or whatever they are) Gull have been taken in northern Alaska, and the recent history of western European populations of Yellow-legged Gull makes its future appearance in the ABA Checklist area plausible. Field characteristics of immature Yellow-legged Gulls are now being worked out in Europe, but even when these marks become better known, specimens may be needed to establish their presence in the New World. The status of Vega Gull requires more work; it may be a pale northern race of Slaty-backed Gull, and its relationship with Herring Gull populations in northwestern Russia needs to be ascertained. The key to understanding this complex in the Palearctic is the contact zone be-



tween the forms that meet in the northwestern Soviet Union. The Armenian Gull is a Mediterranean endemic, unlikely to reach the New World. The New World forms offer far more opportunities for lumping than they do for splitting. Western and Glaucous-winged Gull, in particular, seem unlikely to survive long as separate species.

#### Glaucous Gull

"Subspecies of the Glaucous Gull, *L. hyperboreus*, (Aves: Charadriiformes)" (Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash. 99:149-159; 1986) by Richard Banks clarifies some of the confusion about variation in, and identification of, this species. Most investigators have recognized no or only two subspecies of Glaucous Gull, even though Soviet ornithologists have named Siberian populations as a third race. Motivated by the need to identify specimens from the central United States, Banks examined birds from the entire range of the species and concluded that the Glaucous Gull actually has four subspecies, of which three occur in the ABA Checklist area. Northern Alaska east to the Mackenzie River delta is inhabited by a small, relatively dark race, *barrovianus*. The Canadian arctic is inhabited by a larger, relatively pale race, for which the name *leucereetes* was resurrected and which previously was confused with the darker, slightly larger nominate race from the western Palearctic. The largest, palest race, *pallidissimus*, inhabits northern Siberia east to the islands of the Bering Sea; these occasionally wander farther east into the Alaska mainland. Most populations winter south of

their nesting range. All specimens of Glaucous Gull taken on the Pacific coast appear to be *barrovianus*, and those from east of the Rockies appear to be *leucereetes* (except for a few that proved to be albinistic Herring Gulls). Birds from the Great Plains evidently come from the western Canadian arctic and are slightly smaller than birds from the Atlantic seaboard. *Barrovianus* is so small that size comparison with other members of the Herring Gull complex is not diagnostic in the field; thus, the upper of the two immature "Iceland Gulls" from British Columbia illustrated in *American Birds*, Vol. 39:202 (1985), is a Glaucous Gull, and the other is indeterminate.

#### Thayer's Gull

Thayer's Gull has been controversial ever since it was described in 1912. By 1920 ornithological consensus made it at best a poorly defined race of Herring Gull. By the mid-1960s field work, primarily by Canadians, had established that its nesting range overlapped the Herring Gull and that the two differed in preferred nesting habitats—cliffs versus level tundra—in the overlap zone. Similarities in nesting habitat and in morphological characters suggested that Thayer's Gull actually was a race of Iceland Gull, but this idea fell out of favor when Neill Smith reported overlap of Thayer's and Iceland Gull on Baffin Island. Smith described an elaborate series of experiments that seemed to show that the gulls used the differences in eye and wing tip color to sort themselves out in this overlap area. There has long been an undercur-

rent of disbelief about this work, which no one else has been able to repeat in comparable overlap zones between other members of the Herring Gull complex, and rumors have circulated that Canadian ornithologists have found that these forms intergrade rather than overlap elsewhere. Further, Smith's experiments meant that, if one found intergradation on Baffin Island, this hybridization could be attributed to the disturbance which Smith had induced in these populations, at least over the time span of a few generations of gulls. Now, A. J. Canaster and R. Zecher have described "Interbreeding of Thayer's Gull, *Larus thayeri*, and Kumlien's Gull, *Larus glaucooides kumlieni*, on Southampton Island, Northwest Territories" (*Can. Field Natur.* 99:257-259; 1985). They report a newly discovered mixed colony in which all birds have purple-red orbital rings but a complete mix

of dark to light iris pigmentation and wing tip patterns. There appeared to be no association of iris color with wing tip color in this colony, and the gulls paired at random with respect to plumage patterns in the 12 pairs (of the 45 to 50 in the colony) in which the authors could identify both birds. If you despair separating Thayer's from Iceland Gull, rejoice. This paper may mark the beginning of the end of *thayeri* as a species. However, as the darkest *thayeri* are very hard to distinguish from small Herring Gulls, you still must confront the not trivial task of separating those two, whatever the taxonomic decisions to emerge from this and subsequent discoveries.

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Brunner). Rough-legged Hawks were considered to be generally more numerous than usual (TW, DP, HN). There are at present no regularly censused transects, other than the C.B.C.s, to provide more quantitative assessment of raptor populations.

There were a welcome 3 times as many Peregrine Falcon sightings on southern V.I. this season as in recent years (VG). Other reporting areas for which there are consistent histories of sightings indicated about normal numbers. There were 10+ Gyrfalcon sightings, slightly more than in the past 2 years, with six of these found regularly through the season at favored locations in n.w. Washington and southern V.I. (TW, VG). About one-half dozen Prairie Falcons were noted in w. Oregon, with none found n. of the Columbia R. This is the normal winter distribution of large falcons in our area.

The count of 156 California Quail on the Victoria C.B.C. indicated that the population is holding on there following a sharp decline several years ago. The 14 Virginia Rails in Victoria Dec. 15 (C.B.C.) and in Vancouver, B.C., Dec. 16 (C.B.C.) were both high counts, but these censuses preceded the severe weather of late December. At the Montlake fill on the U.W. campus in Seattle the one-half dozen Virginia Rails survived the freeze well, and were singing by late February (ER). Single Soras were seen Dec. 16 on Sea I., near Vancouver, B.C. (†H. & J. MacKenzie), and heard Dec. 30 at the Montlake fill in Seattle (K. Aanerud). Two Sandhill Cranes were unusual in Delta, B.C., Dec. 23 (†M. Schouten *et al.*) and about 90 wintered on Sauvie I., Ore. (HN), and adjacent Batchelor I. (TW). Heavy migration of Sandhill Cranes up the Willamette Valley was noted Feb. 28 (VT, R. Smith).

**SHOREBIRDS THROUGH GULLS** — Three Snowy Plovers lingered at Ft. Stevens S.P., n.w. Oregon, to Dec. 19 (S. Jagers). A flock of 15 Willets, 75 Marbled Godwits and three Long-billed Curlews were present Jan. 17 at their regular wintering area on the mouth of the North R., w. of Raymond, Wash. (G & WH). Single Willets also wintered at Yaquina Bay, Ore. (*vide* HN), and on Ediz Hook, Port Angeles, Wash. (MC, D & SS). Two Wandering Tattlers (J. Olsen) and a Red Knot (DFi *et al.*) were late at Tillamook, Ore., Dec. 15 and furnished the only reports of those species. Five Spotted Sandpipers found on southern V.I. (VG *et al.*) and three in the Vancouver, B.C., area (WWe, MF *et al.*) were near the n. limit of the wintering range of this species. Single Ruddy Turnstones, rare here in winter, were at the Tsawwassen jetty, Delta, B.C., Dec. 23 (†BS), at Metchosin, V.I., Dec. 27 (WC, G. Davidson), and at the mouth of the Capilano R., N. Vancouver, B.C., Jan. 27 (BS). The only W. Sandpiper reported in B.C. was with the Dunlin on the Iona I. ponds throughout the season (BK, MP *et al.*). Small groups of up to 39 Long-billed Dowitchers were widely reported during December. Thereafter, only six Feb. 9 at Finley N.W.R., Ore. (D. Hall, B. Orr), and five Feb. 25 on Reifel I., Delta, B.C. (BK, J. Hudson) were noted. Reports of Black-bellied Plovers, Greater Yellowlegs, and Dunlin indicated that these species wintered in the Region in their normal numbers.

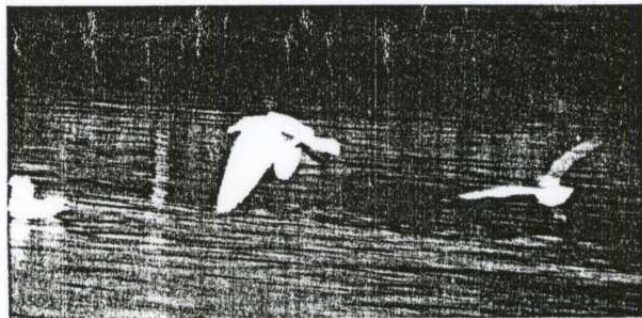
A jaeger of undetermined species was seen Dec. 15 off Gambier I., n.w. of Vancouver, B.C. (†D. Brown) for the only report. This was most likely a lingering fall migrant Parasitic Jaeger, particularly at this location far from the open ocean. A Franklin's Gull Dec. 12 near Salem, Ore. (J. Corbett, T. DeSousa, *vide* BB), and another in first-winter plumage, Feb. 14-16 at Sauvie I., Ore. (B. O'Brien, C. Miller, *vide* HN) were unusual winter visitors. An ad. Little Gull noted Dec. 16 on American L., Tacoma, Wash. (†CC, N. Chappell), but gone the next day, furnished a late fall record of this rare but regular species. Bonaparte's Gulls apparently withdrew from Canadian waters after Dec. 28, with the first returnees noted Feb. 10-12 at River Jordan, on the w. coast of V.I. (B. Hay, M & VG). The 65-100 California Gulls found Jan. 5-Feb. 3 at Trout L., Vancouver, B.C. (BK), and the 73 found Jan. 6 at John Hendry P., Vancouver, B.C. (MF), were high counts for this uncommon wintering species.

The 2000+ Thayer's Gulls Dec. 1 at the Hartland Ave. landfill, Highland Land District, southern V.I., was the high count for this species (KT, TZ, CH). One thousand Thayer's were in Victoria Dec. 15 (C.B.C.) and counts of 200 were made at Iona I. and the Richmond landfill, both near Vancouver, B.C., during the winter (MP, MF). Certainly owing to, in some degree, a more dedicated searching of this regular concentration of Thayer's Gulls, observers at Iona I. found several "Kumlien's" Iceland Gulls. Adults were observed there Nov.

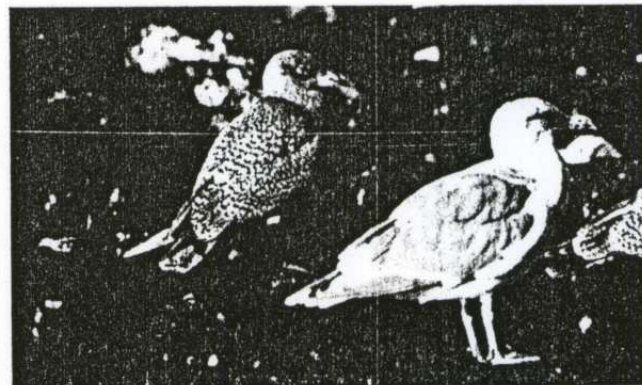


First-winter Iceland Gull on southern Vancouver Island, B.C., Feb. 10, 1985. Photo/Tim Zurowski.

GLAUCOUS!



Adult (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull at Iona I., near Vancouver, B.C., Dec. 12, 1984. Photo/Mike Force.



First-winter Iceland Gull (with adult Glaucous-winged Gull) on southern Vancouver Island, B.C., Dec. 23, 1984. Photo/Bruce Whittington.

9-Dec. 24 (†MF ph., †BK *et al.*). From the pattern of gray on the wingtips, and degree of streaking on head and neck, as many as five different birds were believed to have been present (MF, ms. in prep.). A first-winter "Kumlien's" was found Dec. 23 (†KT, †BrW. ph.) and Feb. 10 (KT, R. Williams, TZ, ph.) at the Hartland Ave. landfill for the first record for V.I. Another first-winter bird was seen Jan. 4 on Trout L., Vancouver, B.C. (†BK, MF). About 29 Glaucous Gulls, a usual number, were reported from throughout the Region. Seven of these—an adult, three first-year, and three second-year—were seen Feb. 23 at the Richmond landfill, B.C. (MF, BK). Single, and probably separate, ad. Sabine's Gulls were seen Feb. 11 & 12 in strong winds at River Jordan, Clover Pt., and Sooke Bay, V.I. (VG, KT).

**ALCIDS THROUGH OWLS** — The 232 Marbled Murrelets around Victoria Dec. 15 (C.B.C.) provided the highest count there since 1965. The high count for the season of Ancient Murrelets was 130 seen Dec. 7

from a trend in species (BaW) returne airport In re the high 40 was Snowie Jan. 24 (*vide* D. Catala Feb. 16 of Van Pygmy seen re Thoma Washir reflecte Owls, Valley noted in and N. Long-e Meador At le 4 previ record of six in (K. M. Chilliw was for Univ. V 13 (T. I ver, B. Belling Simon Saanich Wash.

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## Documentation Form

**Species:** Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*), 1st year

**Location:** Red Rock Dam, Marion County, Iowa

**Habitat:** rock bar below dam, in association with Ring-billed and Herring Gulls

**Date:** March 19, 1997

**Time:** 2:20 -2:56 pm

**Length of observation:** 36 minutes

**Name and Address:** Aaron Brees  
219 S. Franklin  
Corydon, Ia 50060

**Other Observers:** none

**Description of bird:**

**Size:** Similar in size to Ring-billed Gulls. Appeared to stand slightly taller. Appeared to be slightly bulkier. Considerably smaller than Herring Gulls. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were side by side with bird for comparison.

**Eyes:** Dark

**Legs:** Light pink

**Bill:** Basal 2/3 medium black, tip dark black, not sharply define; appeared solid black at a distance. Proportionally very short and thin; much less massive than Herring Gull.

**Plumage:** The entire bird appeared to be pure white except for some dark barring on the undertail coverts and some barely visible, extremely faded barring on the lesser/greater covert area. There was no contrast between tail, uppertail coverts, or mantle. There was no contrast between any feather groups in the wings. Primary extension was not noted.

**Head:** Very rounded, no streaking.

**In flight:** There was no noticeable wing pattern, as the entire upper and underwings appeared to be white with no contrasting feather groups. There was also no noticeable pattern on the tail which was white and did not contrast with the uppertail coverts.

**Similar species and how eliminated:**

**1st year Glaucous Gull:** Eliminated two ways. 1) Overall size. This bird was smaller than a Herring Gull, compared with Glaucous, which varies in size from Herring to Great Black-backed Gull. 2) Bill pattern and structure. This birds' bill was very small and thin. Also, first year Glaucous bills have a clearly defined black tip and a basal section that varies from flesh-pink to yellowish-cream. This birds bill was all dark with the tip being slightly darker and not clearly defined.

Grant, referring to Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, states that "size alone is a valid distinction for individuals which are...obviously smaller than an average Herring Gull" and "On first-years there is a diagnostic difference in bill pattern. Glaucous Gull always has the basal two-thirds bright flesh-pink to yellowish-cream and a sharply contrasting, square-cut black tip.." and "At long range, the bill may look wholly dark, which is never the case on Glaucous. The bill pattern difference holds good throughout the first year at least...(Grant 1986)."

**1st year Thayer's Gull:** Eliminated several ways: 1) Overall color. This bird was basically pure white, compared to Thayer's which comes in various shades of brown depending on the individual. 2) Lack of a dark secondary bar. Thayer's Gull, in flight, shows a dark secondary bar consisting of a broken row of dark spots. Iceland Gulls show no dark secondary bar of any type, and this bird did not show any dark, contrasting feather groups on the wings. 3) Lack of contrast between tail and uppertail coverts. Thayer's Gull generally shows a dark tail contrasting with lighter uppertail coverts. Iceland Gull generally shows non-contrasting tail and uppertail coverts, which was the case with this bird. 4) Some minor details that are not diagnostic, but point to Iceland Gull: This bird had no markings on the head, while Thayer's Gull often (usually?) shows a dark smudge through the eye; This bird's legs were very pale pink, while Thayer's Gull is said to average brighter pink than similar species, including Iceland Gull.

**Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics):** distance approx. 50 yds., sun at my back, viewed with 8 x 42 binoculars and 15x-60x scope

**Previous experience with this species and similar ones:** No experience with Iceland Gull; I have seen five 1st year Glaucous Gulls, four 1st year Thayer's Gulls, and one adult basic Thayer's Gull.

**References consulted before writing description:**

Kaufman, Kenn. 1990. Advanced Birding.  
Grant, P.J. 1986. Gulls--A Guide to Identification. 2nd edition.

**How long before field notes made?** Field notes and sketch were made while observing the bird.

**This form completed?** 8 days

200 Jan - 2009

Feb. 19, ca 19

- mixed flock

R-billed / -looming

1-1000000 Adults, 5000, 2000

- very noisy

Ornith. 100 pp. 1977-79

much smaller, eyes slightly larger (minors)  
- very noisy

- all black bill, very small

Tip darker than rest of bill

bill

- not a lot of pecking up & down

- all feathers are white

- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff

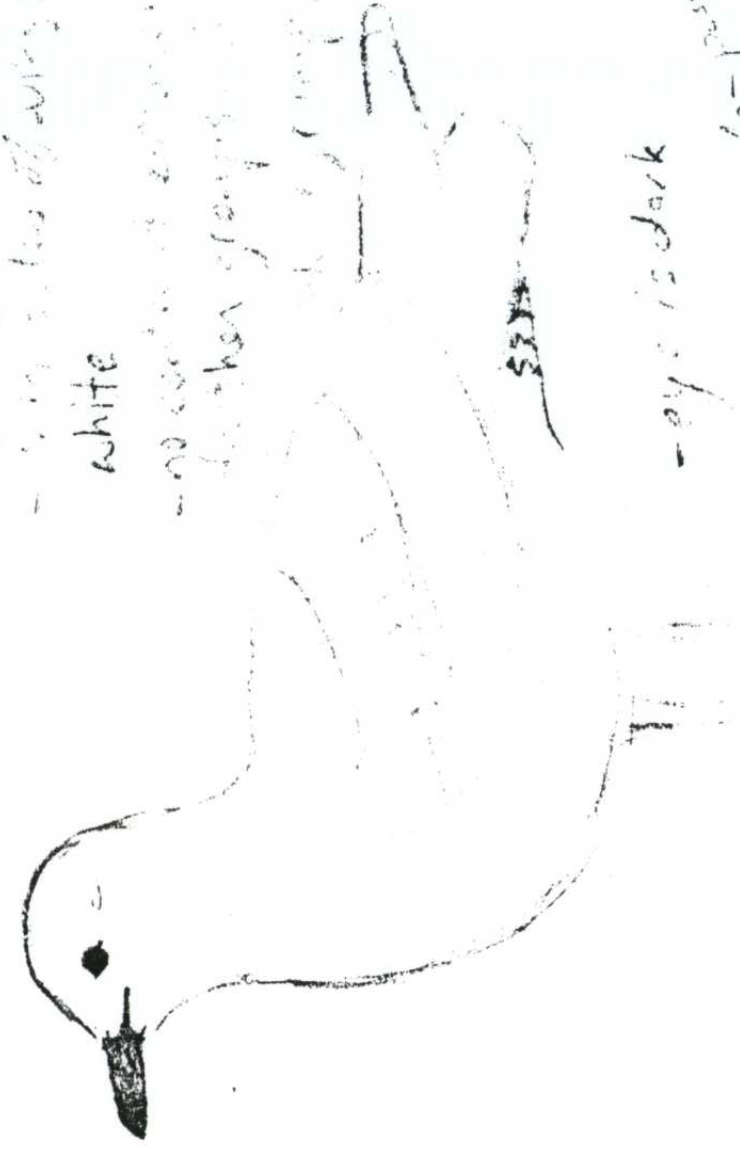
- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff

- all feathers are kind of stiff



- eye is dark

- eye is dark

- eye is dark

- eye is dark

- eye is dark

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- eye is dark

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