

Iceland Gull
17 Dec 1997
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA
*Proescholdt, *Overton, *Dinsmore
P-0587, IBL 68:60, 86

Record Number: 97-56
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Mark Proescholdt (17 Dec), Box 65, Liscomb 50148 [*6/9/98]

Michael D. Overton (18 Dec), 1316 S. Duff #93, Ames 50010
[6/9/98]

Stephen J. Dinsmore (30 Dec), 612 1/2 West Magnolia St., Fort
Collins, CO 80521 [6/9/98, 11/27/98]

PHOTOGRAPH

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 30 Dec 1998, P-0587

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:60

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Adult Thayer's Gull was carefully considered by the
observers and excluded based on coloration of the primaries,
paler mantle and upperwings, and eye color.

A-D, Good discussion and contrast with adult Thayer's plumage.

A-D, Mantle color is convincing as anything. Adult Thayer's
are darker than Herring. Other descriptors support the ID.

A-D, I'd rather see photos determining web patterns of flying
individual primaries at 50 yards, but all other factors point to
Kumlein's Iceland.

A-D, The distinction for Thayer's hinges on the wing pattern,
which was seen well by multiple observers.

A-D, This is a difficult ID. Primary pattern in adults is
extremely variable and I don't believe intermediate-appearing
patterns such as this bird appears to have are diagnostic alone.
Reliance on bird size and shape and head shape are critical.
Overton notes features indicative of Kumlien's Gull--"rounded
head", "different bill to head ratio" but does not describe
latter. Eye color (Dinsmore) is variable and not useful alone in
Kumlien's vs Thayer's. Dinsmore notes "much shorter and thinner
bill" than Herring Gull and rounded head. Overall, the
descriptions of head shape and bill shape/size are strongly
suggestive of Kumlien's. I do not consider primary pattern in
adults particularly useful unless at one or other of the
extremes. A very interesting adult Kumlien's Gull picture was
recently posted on the web at www.nbhc.com/images/gull.htm. It
has black (extensive) primaries, but bill is very small and head
very round. See also Zimmer article in *Birding* (1991).

RE-VOTE (by mail 1998, with photograph): 5 A-D, 2 A-P

A-D, I can't make out diagnostic details on the photograph.

A-D, I cannot definitively call this an Iceland from the
photo.

A-P, Only as supportive information.

97-56

A-D, Distance makes separation from Glaucous impossible. Apparently darker mantle seems to be shadow of left wing on right wing.

A-D, The photo shows a small image of a gull seen from below flying away. The gray in the underpart of the outer wing may be shadow. I can't tell anything about the tail. Nice to have photo as supporting evidence.

A-D, Long narrow wings with suggestion of pale primary tips (right wing) are suggestive, but too distant to be diagnostic.



Iceland Gull 97-56 P-0587
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
30 Dec 1997 Stephen J. Dinsmor

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What species? Kumlien's Iceland Gull How many? 1 adultLocation? Red Rock Reservoir - (Marion Co.)Type of habitat? Below the dam - churning watersWhen? date(s): Dec. 17, 1997 time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. approximatelyWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Curt Nelson, Jan Walter, Mike Overton, Chris Woods from Colorado,others before or after you: (maybe Jim Sandrock was still there) unknown

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.

Curt first spotted this gull. It was flying constantly, but we had real good looks at it. It was a big gull approximately Herring Gull size. It had an all white tail, yellow bill, and pink legs and feet. What we first noticed was the almost white wing tips the bird had. It had light wingtips on the upper wings except for grayish markings on some primary tips and the very tips of the wings were white. It had very white edges on the upper wings surrounding the light gray wings. It had light gray showing on the underwings a little bit. It also had heavy speckling on back of head and neck.

Kenn Kaufman in Advanced Birding said most if not all Iceland Gulls in North America are Kumlien's. We saw this gull twice in our viewing time and debated if it was an adult Kumlien's Iceland Gull or an adult Thayer's Gull. It was an adult Kumlien's Iceland Gull because a Thayer's Gull has much more blackish coloration at the primary tips and more dark coloration at the primary tips than the Kumlien's which has grayish markings on the primary tips. Similar species and how eliminated: and less dark-colored markings at the primary tips ^{overall}

Also, a Kumlien's Iceland Gull shows the almost white wing tips like we saw with a little grayish markings on some primary tips.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Curt Nelson maybe.

If yes, explain: Mike Overton called Curt the next night or so (and me) and at that time Curt thought it was an adult Thayer's Gull.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Sunny, sun behind us, 40-50 yards away estimated. 8x30 Binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I have never seen an adult Kumlien's Iceland Gull or an adult Thayer's Gull.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geographic Birds of N. America, Advanced Birding, Seabirds by Harrison, Birding magazine - Oct. 1991

How long before field notes made? 8:15 p.m. on this form completed? Jan. 4, 1998

Dec. 17, 1997

IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

97-56

Species: Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides kumlieni*) **How many?** 1 basic adult

Location: Marion co., Red Rock Reservoir, Des Moines River Spillway

Habitat: Open water off spillway below dam; large manmade lake in mixed hardwood forest, agricultural cropland.

Date: 18 December 1997 **Time:** Approx. 2:45pm to 3:05pm

Observer: Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

Other Observers: Curt Nelson, Mark Proescholdt, Janice Walter, Chris Wood (Lakewood, CO)

Observers Before and After: Before: none. After: ??

Description: Direct comparisons were possible because numerous Ring-billed Gulls, several Herring Gulls, and two Thayer's Gulls were in the same area.

Size: Medium to large gull, slightly smaller than a Herring Gull.

Shape: Lighter bodied and longer winged than a Herring Gull.

Bill: Yellow with a red spot at the gonydeal angle. Appeared straighter and smaller than a Herring Gull's bill, but this was very hard to judge.

Eyes: Dark brown (not reliable at this distance).

Head: Noticeably rounded with a different bill to head ratio than nearby Herring Gulls. White with diffuse brown streaking primarily on the nape and sides.

Throat: White with diffuse brown streaking.

Back: Pearly gray-white, concolorous with wing, noticeably lighter than Herring Gulls.

Rump: Pearly gray-white fading to white on the upper tail coverts.

Breast/Belly: White with diffuse brown streaking on the upper breast.

Wings: Dorsal: pearly gray-white with a narrow white trailing edge. Extensive white areas on tips of P1 and P2. P1 through P4 or 5 showed light charcoal markings along the outer webs that extended onto the inner webs near the tips of P3 and P4. Ventral: pearly gray-white (slightly lighter than dorsal surface) with a narrow white trailing edge. White translucent area near the tips of P1 and P2 (this area "lit-up" when backlit, similar to the effect shown by Arctic Terns). Faint gray smudging near the tips of P3 and 4.

Tail: Broadly rounded, immaculate white.

Legs/ Feet: Flesh-pink, darker than Herring Gull, not as dark as Thayer's Gull.

Vocalizations: None noted.

Behavior: In flight over open water.

Similar species and how eliminated: Herring Gull: bill to head ratio, head shape, mantle color, primaries, leg color. Glaucous Gull: size, bill structure and ratio to head, head shape, primaries.

Thayer's Gull: primaries, leg color. Nominate Iceland Gull: primaries.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? Yes. We all initially felt this bird was Kumlien's Iceland Gull. We then tried to turn it into a Thayer's Gull. We openly discussed the bird and consulted all available references immediately after the sighting. Mark and I tentatively sided with Kumlien's, Curt tentatively sided with Thayer's, Chris sided strongly with Thayer's, and Jan abstained. The next evening, after consulting my references, I was convinced that the bird was indeed Kumlien's Iceland. I called Mark and learned that he had reached the same conclusion. I then called Curt and learned that he was still undecided. I asked what references he had used, and suggested that he check the text in Harrison and the chapter on Thayer's Gull in Kaufman's Advanced Birding. I then received a call from Chris. Chris stated that after consulting his references and showing his field notes to Tom Schultz (Tom was involved with the gull illustrations in NGS), he wanted to reverse his position as he was now convinced that the bird was Kumlien's. I then called Curt again to relay Chris's information (as per Chris's request). Curt stated that after reviewing Harrison and Kaufman, he was now leaning toward Kumlien's. In summary, this is a tough bird to ID with confidence; however, after trying to turn it into a Thayer's Gull I still must conclude Kumlien's Iceland Gull. All of this will probably be moot when the two "species" are lumped!

Viewing conditions: High overcast, sun behind observers, 40 to 60 yards (estimate), Leupold 12-40x60@40.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Kumlien's Iceland Gull: adult 2/97 PA, immatures NJ, DE, VA, FL. Nominate Iceland Gull: no experience. Glaucous Gull: PA, NJ, DE, VA, FL, IA, TX, WA, CA. Herring Gull: numerous sightings. Thayer's Gull: DE, MN, IA, TX, WA, OR, CA. Numerous sightings on W coast.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Grant, Harrison, Kaufman, NGS, Peterson Eastern, Peterson Western. All present were consulted.

How long before field notes made? 15 minutes this form completed? 2 days

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Iceland Gull

Number: 1 adult basic "Kumlein's"

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

Habitat: open water below dam

Date: 30 December 1997

Time: 2:04-2:40 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 1/2 West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird: Kay Niyo (Ames)

Description of bird(s): I was scanning the large flock of gulls from the South Overlook below the dam when I noticed a number of gulls perched on the rock piles in front of me. Among these gulls was a large gull with distinctly paler wingtips. I studied the bird for about a half hour and left to get my camera. When I returned, the bird took flight before I was able to photograph it.

The bird was in the company of numerous Ring-billed and several Herring Gulls. For most of the observation, the bird was eating a large gizzard shad. The shad was on the rocks, and the bird was facing away from me while it was eating. This allowed very good views of the primaries. The bird was noticeably smaller than a Herring Gull with a smaller, more rounded head, a much shorter and thinner bill, and a greater primary projection. The bill was yellow except for a small red spot near the tip of the lower mandible. Under all lighting conditions, the eye was yellow with a dark brown iris and was compared directly to the yellow eyes of Herring Gulls. The head was lightly streaked with brown, especially on the nape, and there was some brown on the flanks. The remainder of the underparts and tail were white. The mantle was very light gray, noticeably paler than that of nearby Herring Gulls. I studied the upperwing pattern in detail. The upperwings were mostly light gray (same color as mantle) with a broad white trailing edge, broader than that on an adult Herring Gull. The dark color in the primaries was dark charcoal gray, not as dark (black) as on nearby Herring Gulls. All of the primaries had white tips. The outermost primary (p10) had a large area of white at the tip (more so than on any other primary) and a thin charcoal gray line along the outer web of the remainder of the feather. The next primary (p9) had a charcoal subterminal mark followed by a small white mirror and then charcoal along the outer web of the remainder of the feather. The next primary (p8) had a charcoal subterminal mark and a reduced amount of charcoal color extending along the outer web. The remaining primaries were more difficult to examine, but at least p7 (and possibly p6) had reduced subterminal charcoal marks. From underneath, p10 had a black line along the outer edge and the tips of the next 2-3 feathers (p7-9) had dark tips. The remainder of the underwing was pale. The legs were dull pink. Based on color of the bare parts and plumage, I concluded the bird was an adult in basic plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated: The two most similar species are Herring and Thayer's Gulls. Under direct comparisons, Herring Gull had a yellow eye, larger bill, shorter primary projection, and more extensive black color in the wingtips. Thayer's Gull was eliminated largely on the basis of a paler mantle and upperwings, eye color, and the specific pattern of dark color on the outer primaries.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with mostly clear skies and the sun behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 25-35m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous Iceland Gulls in Massachusetts and North Carolina, plus a few in Iowa and Nebraska. Most have been first-year birds, but I have seen many adult "Kumlein's" in Massachusetts. Also familiar with both Herring and Thayer's Gulls.

References consulted: Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: some notes written during observation

How long before this form completed: written 6 January 1998