

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/22/00

Lesser Black-backed Gull  
27 Nov 1996  
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA  
\*Stephen J. Dinsmore  
IBL 67:22, 82

Record Number: 96-61  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:22  
Records Committee: IBL 67:82

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Every diagnostic piece is covered.

A-D, I have never seen this plumage, but the description is what would be expected as described in Grant.

A-D, Careful detailed study and description confirms ID.

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull

Number: 1 first-basic

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

Habitat: dam tailwaters

Date: 27 November 1996

Time: 3:22-3:40 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I was scanning the hundreds of gulls resting on the sandbars below the dam when a larger, immature gull caught my eye. The bird was resting with Ring-billed Gulls, and was about 25% larger than the largest individual. Compared to other nearby first-basic Herring Gulls, this bird was slightly smaller with the appearance of a darker saddle. When perched, the wingtips extended well beyond the tail, much more so than on any Herring Gull. The bill was entirely black, fairly thin, and straight, and lacked the paler base present on nearby Herring Gulls. Bill size resembled that of the smallest Herring Gulls. The eye appeared dark. The head and neck were light brown with some darker streaks on the neck. There was a small amount of white around the base of the bill. The eye was dark. The remainder of the underparts were white with darker mottling. When perched, the mantle and upperwings were slightly darker than the head and underparts. The tail appeared dark when perched. The mantle was mottled very dark brown (almost black), appearing scaly because of the darker spots on the feather tips. The legs were dull pink. At this point, I was fairly certain the bird was a Lesser Black-backed Gull, but I wanted to see the bird in flight to be certain. In flight, the birds dark-mantled appearance was even more striking compared to Herring Gulls. The entire wingtip (primaries and their coverts) was black, as were the secondaries and the greater secondary coverts. The bird lacked an obvious pale window on the inner primaries. In flight, the rump and uppertail coverts were white with some darker speckling on the outer rectrices. The rectrices were black. The white rump contrasted with the darker mantle and rectrices. These features identified the bird as a Lesser Black-backed Gull in first-basic plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated: The most similar-appearing species is first-basic Herring Gull. The combination of slightly smaller size, longer wings, whiter rump, more speckled mantle, contrast between the darker mantle and lighter head, and darker upperwings lacking a pale "window" eliminated Herring Gull in first-basic plumage.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was 75m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous Lesser Black-backed Gulls in North Carolina and Massachusetts. Most were adults, but I have seen numerous immatures, including >20 in first-basic plumage. I am also familiar with the similar Herring Gull in first-basic plumage.

96-61

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

How long before field notes made: none written

How long before this form completed: written 28 November 1996