

Sabine's Gull
24 Sep 1989
Fremont Co., IA
J. Braley
IBL 60:15, 61:85

Record Number: 89-49
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Jean B. Braley

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:15

Records Committee: IBL 61:85

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D: Excellent document, well researched.

A-D: Description is adequate but a little short on detail of many parts of the bird. Sketch seems to be fairly convincing of a distinctive species and kittiwake is eliminated. An amazing roadside bird.

A-D: Nice find! It would have been helpful to have given more written description of the bird itself, but your sketches helped make up for it. Was a little surprised to read of it eating a dead Barn Swallow along the road.

N-A: The wing pattern diagram does not fit Sabine's Gull. I feel the description more likely describes a first winter Bonaparte's Gull which was not eliminated by the observer.

A-D: Combination of grayish brown on back and top of head, black in what looks to be the leading outer primaries, white in the inner primaries through the secondaries and partially through the secondary coverts, with a white v-shaped black tipped tail excludes any other species. Coloration of the lesser and median wing coverts not mentioned but with all the other marks shown would not have been a concluding mark in and of itself. Drawing is acceptable evidence but a written description would have made this description easier to follow.

A-D: A fascinating sighting and story with nice details.

A-D: Well described by an experienced birder, but in a strange location! Sketches confirm rather unmistakable species.

REVOTE: 6 A-D; 1 NA

A-D: Drawing of wing pattern eliminates Bonaparte's (black on primaries too extensive) no black on trailing edge.

A-D: I disagree with first round NA evaluator. The wing pattern does fit Sabine's and it does eliminate Bonaparte's.

A-D: The drawing of the wing looked like a Sabine's to me. While the observer may not have specifically eliminated Bonaparte's, the description did.

NA: The wing pattern is confusing to me. I'm not sure where the body is located. Assuming the body is to the left, the picture supports immature Bonaparte's Gull instead of Sabine's Gull. The written description doesn't clarify this point, so with little else but tail pattern to go on I must vote for the much more likely Bonaparte's Gull.

A-D: I disagree with NA. The diagram shows a lot of black in the primary area which agrees with Sabine's and the two kittiwakes but not for Bonaparte's. This (along with v-shaped

tail) eliminates Bonaparte's. Grayish brown on back and top of head and partially through secondary coverts eliminates the kittiwakes.

A-D: A great bird to come upon! Descriptions and drawings designated immature Sabine's Gull. The leg color, the "veed" tail, and the wing drawing eliminates immature Bonaparte's Gull from contention.

A-D: Disagree with NA--diagrams (especially of tail pattern) clearly eliminates Bonaparte's Gull. What Bonaparte's has black primaries?

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-49

What species? SABINE'S GULL (Xema sabini) [IMMATURE?] How many? 1

Location? HIWAY #2, NORTH OF FARRAGUT, IA c 1 mile E. of Co Rd M16 to 1 MILE W.

Type of Habitat? STATE HIGHWAY — NISHNA BOTNA RIVER PARALLEL TO ROAD ^{1/8 to 1/4 mile s.}

When? date(s): SUNDAY, SEPT 24 time: c 9:20 to 9:27

Who? your name and address: JEAN B. BRALEY (MRS FRANCIS M.) ^{209 W. THOMAS SHERANDORCH, IA 51601}

Others with you: F.M. BRALEY

Others before or after you: NONE, AS FAR AS KNOWN (SEE ATTACHED NOTE)

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

RELATIVELY SMALL SIZED GULL. FIRST NOTED DISTINCTIVE BLACK AND WHITE WINGS, BLACK-EDGED SLIGHTLY FORKED WHITE TAIL. BIRD FLEW ALONG ROAD AT ABOUT EYE LEVEL WITH VIEWERS (DRIVING IN 4-WHEEL VEHICLE FROM E TO W) — SOMETIMES TURNING TO NORTH BUT IMMEDIATELY RETURNING TO FLY PARALLEL TO HIGHWAY. WE PULLED ONTO SHOULDER SEVERAL TIMES TO LET BIRD FLY AHEAD SO WE MIGHT USE BINOCULARS (HARDLY NEEDED, IT WAS SO CLOSE). ON THE HIWAY WEST OF THE INTERSECTION W/ M16, THE GULL DROPPED ONTO THE ROAD DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF US + PECKED AT A ROAD-KILLED BARN SWALLOW. THERE WAS NO TRAFFIC AT THE MOMENT + WE STOPPED ONLY A FEW FEET BEHIND THE BIRD. IT LOOKED AT + IGNORED US, EATING THE SWALLOW. TRAFFIC WAS HEARING IN BOTH LANES, SO I PICKED UP THE REMAINS OF THE KILL + TOSSED IT TO THE SHOULDER OF THE ROAD.

SEE FIELD NOTES FOR FURTHER DESCRIPTION

Similar species; how eliminated:
FELT SURE IT WAS NOT A FAMILIAR SPECIES (TO ME) ALTHOUGH I THOUGHT ABOUT BL KITTIWAKE (R. Tridactyla) BUT WINGS TOO BLACK + WHITE WITHOUT BLACK BAND TO BODY; SMALLER SIZE; NO BLACK BAND ACROSS NECK.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. EXCELLENT MORNING LIGHT AT OUR BACKS; BOTH VIEWERS USING 7X35 BAUSCH + LOMB BINOCULARS; ESTIMATED DISTANCES FROM ABOUT 4 FEET, WHEN I STEPPED FROM VEHICLE, TO 100 FEET (+/-)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: NONE BECAUSE OF TAIL CONSIDERED KITTIWAKE, A FAMILIAR SPECIES WE SEE IN SAN DIEGO AREA, BUT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE A R.T. AT ALL OTHERWISE.

References and persons consulted before writing description: SUN, ~~SEPT~~ SEPT 24 (SEE ATTACHED NOTE) WHILE CALLED ROSS SILCOCK AT NOON

How long before field notes made? WATCHING this form completed? 5 DAYS

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

SEE BACK OF FORM.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

89-49

BIRDS OF N. AMERICA - ROBINSON, ETC. (FIELD GUIDE IN VEHICLE)

AT HOME CONSULTED:

PETERSON'S FIELD GUIDE

(OLD) AUDUBON WATER BIRD GUIDE - ROUGH

(PICTURE OF IMM. IN FLIGHT AS I WOULD HAVE DRAWN BIRD AS IT FLEW BESIDE + JUST AHEAD OF US, WERE I AN ARTIST)

AUDUBON ENCY. OF N. AM. BIRDS - TERRES

NATH GEO SOC. WATER, PREY + GAME BIRDS OF U.A.

BIRDS OF AMERICA - T. GILBERT PEARSON, ETC.

BIRDS OF " - J. J. AUDUBON

(FRANCES C. BORDNER 1883-1977)

ALSO CHECKED REFERENCES FROM MY MOTHERS LIBRARY - ALL PUBLISHED PRIOR TO 1930!

BIRDS OF E. N. AMER. --- CHAPMAN

MICHIGAN BIRD LIFE ---- BARROWS

BIRDS OF E. N. AMER. CA REED

BIRDS OF W. CANADA PATAVENER

(THIS BOOK, WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATIONS

BY ALLAN BROOKS, CONTAINS THIS COMMENT

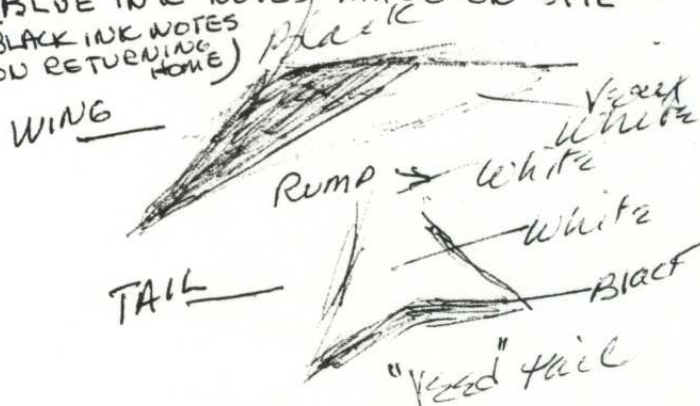
ABOUT XEMA SABINI: "ONE OF THE MOST

delicately beautiful of the gulls, but too

rare to receive more than passing attention."

WE AGREE! ←

(BLUE INK NOTES MADE ON SITE -
BLACK INK NOTES ON RETURNING HOME)



BIRD SITTING ON HIGHWAY EATING ROAD-KILLED SWALLOW
 White spot on shoulder
 top of head/back
 grayish (brown?)
 Bill 2/3 black
 Forehead white
 legs grayish
 not really brown (maybe)

SOME WHITE SPOTS SHOWING ON FEATHERS AS BIRD SAT

89-49

