

Thayer's Gull
17 Dec 1989
L&D 15, Scott Co., IA
B. Blevins
IBL 60:52, 61:86

Record Number: 89-53
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Brian Blevins

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:52
Records Committee: IBL 61:86

VOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

NA: Document does not furnish enough details to convince me that this gull was a Thayer's.

NA: Bird was not aged by original observer although it appears that someone else (Petersen?) added a later notation that this was an adult. If so, the darker eye and less conspicuous black on folded wingtips suggest Thayer's. However, one would expect a slightly darker mantle, not lighter as described. This feature casts a reasonable doubt on a positive ID. Notes first made a day after observation possibly led to this discrepancy. It always helps to see notes made during or immediately after an observation.

A-D: Brian, while your description of the actual appearance of the bird was extraordinarily brief, I must admit I learned something. I didn't know an adult Thayer's could be identified by dark eye and small amount of black on the primary tips. Regardless, I sure would like to see more detail in subsequent documentations.

A-D: The description seems to fit a dark eyed Kumlien's Gull better than Thayer's. Although uncommon, a significant percentage of Kumlien's Iceland Gull have a dark eye according to Advanced Birding. The mantle color is described as lighter than the Herring Gulls present and the primaries as having very little black as compared to the Herring Gulls present. Thayer's should have a slightly darker mantle and only moderately less black in the primaries as compared to Herring Gulls. Although I would have trouble voting A-D for Iceland based on the info available, I think the probability that the described gull is a Kumlien's Iceland Gull is much higher than Thayer's Gull.

NA: This is a very difficult record to comment on. At first this seems an easy record to decide. There are hardly any details about the bird in the documentation. There is no size comparison between any of the other birds that were seen. The only identification criteria used was the dark eye and not as much darkness in the primaries. A very few Herrings have reduced black in the wingtip. The description does not say to what degree the blackness was reduced in the wingtip either. Iceland Gull not even considered. Some *L. kumleini* have darkness in the eye which varies with the darkness of the mantle (Kauffman, Advanced Birding, 1990). Thayer's is also supposed to have a darker mantle than Herring, not lighter as in this record. According to Kauffman (Advanced Birding) taken together with size and

bill/head proportions, careful study of wing pattern on flying birds should allow separation of most adult hybrids also. These were not mentioned in the documentation.

NA: Much more details on the gull plumage is needed-underwing and upperwing coloration, bill color and shape, and head color and shape along with comparing and contrasting with nearby Herring Gulls. National Geographic Guide and Kenn Kauffman state that adult Thayer's Gull mantle should be slightly darker than a Herring Gull's mantle. Kaufman in Advanced Birding (p. 128) states "that a very few Herring Gulls (perhaps especially females from eastern Canada) have reduced black in the wingtip". Eye color may be tricky at times, too.

A-D: Brief description but key features noted: eye color, extent of black in primaries (although not very detailed description), and direct comparison of mantle color with Herring Gulls.

89-53

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowain Iowa or other states
seen from 1/1What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1 - act.Location? Just above the Lock & Dam 15 (Davenport, Ia)Type of Habitat? Frozen ice above the dam on the Mississippi RiverWhen? date(s): Dec. 17, 1989 time: 3:30 PM. 10 3:42 PM.Who? your name and address: Brian Blevins 2003 East 12th Street Davenport, Ia.Others with you: Corey & Lewis BlevinsOthers before or after you: Apparently nobody that day

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.

The bird was picked out of a small pack of about 20 gulls all but two were Herring. A glaucous immature was first found, then we pointed out a herring gull type with a dark eye. (Looking through scope) A lighter mantle was noticed and very little black on the primary tips in comparison with the herrings. This was observed when the bird was milling around with a few herrings just above the rest of the pack.

Behavior - very similar to that of herrings.

Similar species; how eliminated: Herring Gull - eliminated by the dark eye and by the lack of black on the primary tips.

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

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Direct Sunlight from the West 15X 45X spotting scope

Distance - 70 yds. (measured by eye)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: We usually observe a few of these every winter.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Natural Geo. guide.

How long before field notes made? 1 day this form completed? 2 days

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