

Iceland Gull
31 Jan 1993
Lock and Dam 14, Scott Co., IA
*J. Fuller
adult; IBL 63:49, 64:68

Record Number: 93-04
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240 [11/27/93]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:49

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, Size, mantle color lighter than Herring Gull, description of primaries, and wing are indicative of Iceland Gull.

NA, Adult. Although this record is highly suggestive of Adult Iceland, I am not convinced that the very similar adult Thayer's has been ruled out. Most of the field marks such as size, bill color, mantle color, underwing, as well as general description of underwing could apply to either species. Not diagnostically described (obviously because this is difficult to see on a flying bird) was wing tip pattern. While the observer stated that there were no black areas on the wing tip, I presumed that this was a general impression of a flying gull, and was used to separate this bird from Herrings and Ring-bills. The observer did describe the wingtip webbing as dark. Zimmer's article in *Birding* (Vol 23, #5, pg. 267) discusses the color of this webbing. It ranges from pale gray to charcoal in Iceland, but black in Thayer's. Unfortunately, its description as "dark" does not resolve this question.

A-D, Adult Kumlien's. I think the adult Thayer's could match this description, except that Thayer's should have more extensive "black" webbing which would not be confined to the outer 3 primaries.

A-D, This record would have been easier to evaluate if the observer had explained why this bird was not an adult Thayer's Gull. A mantle lighter than Herring (NGS says THayer's is darker than Herring and Iceland) and the description of the primaries are enough, however, to convince me. Size smaller than Herring with black on the primaries would eliminate both Glaucous and Thayer's. I can find no reference that even a washed out Thayer's Gull would not have a bit of black coloration on the primaries.

A-D, The small size and wing tip pattern exclude Glaucous Gull and the wing tip fits Kumlien's rather than Thayer's.

REVOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, While I feel that my arguments had merit, I missed what one of the A-D voters pointed out -- that the mantle of an Iceland is paler than a Herring's while a Thayer's is darker. This is confirmed by Kaufman in *Advanced Birding*.

A-D, I think the adult Thayer's Gull could match this description, except that Thayer's should have more extensive "black" webbing which would not be confined to the outer 3 primaries and the dark areas would come to the base of the primaries in Thayer's.

A-D, Dark webbing confined to the outer 2 or 3 primaries and "no black area at the end of the wing" are characteristics of Iceland Gull.

A-D, Based on the wing tip description, I am willing to put this in the Iceland category, realizing that the two may soon be lumped, and that I probably would not have done this a few years ago.

A-D, Mantle lighter than Herring, size smaller than Herring and "dark" webbing in outer two or three primaries more likely is the pale charcoal Kumlien Iceland coloration; if it would have been black as in Thayer's I think it would have been more obvious that dark as described.

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DOCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

SPECIES: Iceland Gull (Adult and First-Winter)

LOCATION: Lock & Dam #14, Mississippi River, Scott County.

DATE & TIME: January 31, 1993 (9:55-10:35 AM).

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.

BIRD #1 (ADULT-KUMLIEN'S): After walking to the area opposite the lock, I was watching the gulls flying below the dam. I noticed a quite light adult gull, that had no black area at the end of the wing, either on the upperwing, or underwing. The underwing was totally light, but the upperwing had what appeared to be dark webbing between the outer two or three primaries. This dark streak did not extend to either the tips of the feathers or to the base of the feathers. In addition, some of the outer primaries had dark spots very close to their tips. The general size of the bird was smaller than any of the numerous Herring Gulls in the area. The mantle and upper wing (except for the wing tip as described) were a light gray, lighter than an adult Herring Gull. The underwing was entirely light to the end of the primaries. The bill appeared to be light. I only saw the bird flying, and could not see the legs. I watched it fly at distances ranging from 25-200 yards for about five minutes.

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BIRD #2 (FIRST-WINTER): This bird was standing on the backwater ice near the lock with a large group of Herring Gulls. It was exactly like the bird documented at Iowa City. It was smaller than any of the Herring Gulls, almost totally off white (grayish-brown flecking), dark bill, gray-pink legs. I did not see it fly.

93-03

SIMILAR SPECIES: Adult Kumlien's Gull is larger than Ring-billed, and smaller than Herring Gull, both of which have black areas at the end of both upper and underwing.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was a sunny morning. The first-winter bird was viewed toward the north with a KOW-TSN4 telescope at about 60-70 yards, while the Kumlien's was viewed toward the east and northeast, and the lighting was not always good. However, when it was close and I was looking toward the northeast, very good looks were obtained using Swift Audubon 8.5 X 44 binoculars.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I had never seen a Kumlien's Gull previously, but have seen five first-winter Iceland Gulls in the past two years.

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FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Field notes were recorded when I returned to car, and this report was typed on February 4, 1993. No references were viewed until the evening of the sighting, when the National Geographic guide and Harrison's Seabirds were checked.