

Thayer's Gull

2 Dec 1987

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

**S. Dinsmore, **M. Prescholdt, *Moore

2-30 Dec, 1-2 birds; IBL 58:56, 74

Record Number: 87-28
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 5-30 Dec, 26 Dec

Mark Proescholdt, 5 Dec, 9 Dec

Francis L. Moore, 26 Dec

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 58:56

Records Committee: IBL 58:74

VOTE: 3-II, 4-III

III, Dinsmore description of "dark chocolate brown" birds is somewhat troublesome. Most of the chocolate I eat is much darker than I would expect any Thayer's Gull to be. However, there is probably at least one acceptably documented bird in here.

III, I am willing to accept that 1-2 (or even 3) Thayer's Gulls were present, but I am bothered by a few points in the description. Mark's first documentation sounds most like a Thayer's. "Chocolate brown" doesn't describe a Thayer's Gull to me--names of colors mean different things to different people. What does "lacks an obvious dark terminal band" mean? Is there a non-obvious terminal band? I thought Thayer's always had a darker terminal band to tail in 1st year.

II, Taken as a whole the documentations do tend to describe Thayer's Gull. There are slight discrepancies between the documentations indicating a slightly different viewpoint on the sight record of this species.

III, It is interesting to note how the same bird can be "dark-chocolate brown" to one observer and "light brown" to another (i.e., Dinsmore and Moore). In any case there are probably at least two Thayer's described in all of this (The dark one and the very pale one).

II, Thayer's probably regular enough we don't need to vote on each record.

III, Convincing descriptions.

II, Bleh! Lets vote this regular and stop looking at documentations.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Thayer's Gull

How Many?2+ 1st-winter birds

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?sitting on ice with other gulls

Date?2,5,9,13,23,26,30 Dec 1987

Time?approx. 8:00-8:05 a.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:m.ob.

Description of bird:On 2 Dec, I observed a 1st-winter Thayer's Gull above the Saylorville dam. The bird was entirely dark, chocolate brown except for slightly darker wingtips and a darker smudge around the eye. The bill was dark and was thinner and shorter than the bill of a nearby Herring Gull. The legs appeared dark. The head of this bird seemed smaller and more rounded than the head of the Herring Gull. In flight, the undersides of the flight feathers were entirely pale with no dark markings. The upperwing was uniform in color except that the outerwing was slightly darker. There was no light "window" at the base of the primaries. The tail was the same color as the back and wings and lacked an obvious dark terminal band. Even in flight, the bird looked smaller than a Herring Gull. On 5 Dec, Andy Fix and I observed two 1st-winter Thayer's Gulls above the dam. One of the birds was very dark and was probably the same bird I found on 2 Dec. The other bird was much paler and looked very white compared to Herring Gulls. We identified this bird as a Thayer's Gull because of the small, thin bill, very rounded head, smaller size compared to Herring Gulls, pale undersides of the flight feathers, lack of a dark tail band, and over all uniform body color. I saw one or both of these birds several times over the next three weeks. I also suspect that a third bird was present, but I cannot be positive.

Similar species and how eliminated:The overall dark color of the bird and the lack of paler wingtips eliminates first-winter Iceland Gull. The translucent flight feathers, uniform body color, lack of a "window" on the upperwing, smaller, thinner bill, rounder head, dark smudge around the eye, and smaller size eliminates first-winter Herring Gull. The uniform body color, lack of a dark tail band, and translucent flight feathers eliminates first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun behind me most of the time. Estimated viewing distance was usually about 300-500 yards. I used a Buschnell 20-45x spotting scope and Nikon 8x23 binoculars.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Thayer's Gulls in Iowa, including other birds at Saylorville Reservoir in fall 1986.

What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1Location? Above the Saylorville DamType of habitat? Large water reservoirWhen? date(s): Dec. 5, 1987 time: 4:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Andy Fix, Beth Proescholdt

others before or after you: _____

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.

Steve and Andy had found 2 Thayer's Gulls as we were viewing the gulls. I just concentrated my efforts on the Thayer's Gull I had in my scope. This gull was a light uniform brown color, had an all black bill, and a darker brown terminal tail band. It had very ~~rust~~ whitish, frosty primaries and secondaries on the trailing edge of its underwings clear to the tips of its wings. It was 100 yards away and flying and sitting on the water. It had a rounded-looking head shape and the head and body were the same color. Its upper wings were relatively uniformly brown. Its upper tail had a broad brown terminal band that matches the color of the body with the base of the tail lighter. It was quite different-looking than the abundant 1st year Herring ~~Gulls~~ Gulls with it which were darker over-all. (I saw a smudge through the eye of one of the Thayer's in Steve's scope).

Similar species and how eliminated:

1st year Herring Gulls are darker over-all, have much darker wing tips, a dark trailing edge on upper wings, and a dark, blackish tail band.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Cloudy, light behind us, distances estimated, 8X30 Binocs, 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen some in past winters.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Bendroff's IBL Vol. 56, No. 3 on Thayer's Gulls; Natl. Geog. Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? while viewing + this form completed? Feb. 20, 1988
that evening

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1Location? Above the Saylorville DamType of habitat? Large water reservoirWhen? date(s): Dec. 9, 1987 time: 3:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Beth Proescholdt, Bob Cecilothers before or after you: Eugene and Eloise Armstrong pulled up as we were leaving

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.

Steve spotted this different-looking gull sitting in the water with thousands of other gulls. It was very light in color with uniform body color and a rounded head. It was smaller than the Herring Gulls beside it. It flew just a few times and had very light wings. Its secondaries were all light. It had frosty wings when flying reminiscent of Thayers, Glaucous, or Iceland Gulls, but dark wing tips were seen when it was floating. It was very different from Herring Gulls in coloring.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Herring Gulls are much darker over-all, have much darker wing tips, and a dark trailing edge on upper wings. Glaucous and Iceland Gulls don't have dark wing tips when floating.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Partly Sunny with sun behind us. 100-200 yards away. 8X30 Binocs. 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen some in past winters.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Bendorn's IBL Vol. 56, No. 3 on Thayer's Gulls; Nat'l. Geog. Birds of N. America.

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? Feb. 20, 1988

What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1 im.Location? Just North of Saylorville Dam, Polk, Co.Type of habitat? With other gulls on ice above the damWhen? date(s): December 26, 1987 time: 8:10 am to 8:15 amWho? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Steve Dinsmore, Ames; Berg Engobretsen, Des Moines; Jim Sinclair, Indianaothers before or after you: None

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.

This particular bird was on the ice above the dam with lots of other gulls. There were several first year Herring Gulls in the group. This bird appeared to have a more rounded head with a smaller looking bill than the other first year gulls. When the gull flew I could see no darkness in the under surface of the primaries as it wheeled around. The upper surface of the wings and back were all one uniform light brown color with no light and dark contrast in the wings. The leading primaries were not much darker than the rest of the upper surface of the wing. The head was about the same color as the mantle; a Herring gull would have had a lighter head. This bird also was a slight bit smaller than the Herring Gulls all around.

Similar species and how eliminated: Herring Gull, 1st yr., would have more contrast from wings through back area and a lighter colored head. Herring would also have a more sloped profile to the head.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Very good viewing conditions, bright overcast to sunny from approx. 300-400 yards using Celestron 33X telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have identified several Thayer's Gulls; lots of experience with Herring and Ring-billed Gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? None made this form completed? 3 daysMAIL TO: ~~T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240~~

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Thayer's Gull

How Many?1 1st-winter

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?sitting on ice with other gulls

Date?26 Dec 1987

Time?approx. 8:00-8:05 a.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:Francis Moore, Jim Sinclair, Bery Engebretsen

Description of bird:As part of the Des Moines CBC, the four of us met at the Saylorville dam to check over the ducks and gulls on the lake. I was looking through the gulls that were sitting on the ice when I noticed a dark, first-winter gull that was smaller than nearby first-winter Herring Gulls. The bird was entirely dark, chocolate brown except for slightly darker wingtips and a darker smudge around the eye. The bill was dark and was thinner and shorter than the bill of a Herring Gull. Leg color was not seen. The head of this bird seemed smaller and more rounded than the head of a Herring Gull. Jim, Francis, and Bery were just starting to look at the bird when about thirty gulls, including the suspected Thayer's, took off. The birds circled the lake a couple of times and then flew directly over us and on down the river. In flight, the bird had the following wing pattern. The upperwing was uniform in color except that the outerwing was slightly darker. There was no light "window" at the base of the primaries. The flight feathers, viewed from underneath, were entirely translucent except for a dark mark at the tip of primaries 1-4 or 5. The tail was the same color as the back and wings and lacked an obvious dark terminal band. Even in flight, the bird looked smaller than a Herring Gull.

Similar species and how eliminated:The overall dark color of the bird and the lack of paler wingtips eliminates first-winter Iceland Gull. The translucent flight feathers, uniform body color, lack of a "window" on the upperwing, smaller, thinner bill, rounder head, dark smudge around the eye, and smaller size eliminates first-winter Herring Gull. The uniform body color, lack of a dark tail band, and translucent flight feathers eliminates first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun behind us on a clear day. Estimated viewing distance was 400 yards on the perched bird and 40-50 yards when the bird flew over us. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Nikon 8x23 binoculars.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Thayer's Gulls in Iowa, including at least three other birds at Saylorville Reservoir in

December 1987.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made? brief notes written during the observation

How long before this form was completed? written on 4 Jan 1988