Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 08/06/93

Thayer's Gull Record Number: 89-45
24 Nov 1989 Classification: NA
Credit I., Scott Co., IA
P. Petersen
IBL 60:15, 61:86

DOCUMENTATION
Peter C. Petersen
REFERENCES
Field Reports: IBL 60:15
Records Committee: IBL 61:86
VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA
A-D: field marks well described.
A-D: This identification is reasonable but documentation is barely adequate. Underwing pattern should be fairly uniformly light or "silvery" through all primaries, not just "silvery well into primaries". Brown smudge behind eye can be present in Herring Gulls as well. Main convincing feature is upperwing surface desribed as uniformly light to tips although this is often not strictly true for this species. Suggest observer refer to comments by Zimmer (The Western Bird Watcher, 1985) and Kaufman (Advanced Birding, 1990) for more complete information on problems of Thayer's Gull identification and the need to describe all features more completely and carefully.
Since the tail pattern wasn't described, why couldn't this have been an Iceland Gull?
N-A: Despite their apparently annual occurrence in Iowa, Thayer's Gull sightings should be accompanied by thorough documentations. Specifically, Iceland Gull not eliminated, except possibly by smudge through eye, which is not always reliable.
A-D: Proper first year Thayer's Gull description supported by six others.
NA: Description of color is sketchy; detail of upper and lower surface sketchy or non existent. I cannot say beyond reasonable doubt whether this is a Thayer's Gull or not.
A-D: A few more details such as upper tail pattern would have been helpful. Also, I couldn't make out 1 or 2 words on the documentation. But this sounds like a good Thayer's Gull.
NA: A brief description. If I did not believe Thayer's to be expected/regular, I would not think this documentation contained sufficient detail. Definitely borderline A-D, no mention of possibility of Iceland caused N-A vote. No mention of presence/absence of tail band significant in assigning N-A.
REVOTE: 2 A-D, 5 NA
A-D: I believe details are conclusive enough to accept document.
NA: On the first round I said that description was "barely adequate". In view of comments from other NA evaluators, I will err on the conservative side and feel there is reasonable doubt.
NA: I found nothing in the A-D votes to make me change my mind. Most seemed to be just marginally convinced. I agree with the NA and the A-D that Iceland not eliminated. Also, the fact that there were six other Thayer's in the state does not

necessarily mean that there were seven.

NA: I concur with the other NA comments that Iceland not completely ruled out. Thayer's Gull should require a combination of reliable field marks to adequately describe this species. This documentation does not contain this combination with enough detail in order to be sure that what was described was actually (without a reasonable doubt) a Thayer's Gull and not another species.

NA: I am changing my vote to NA because the Iceland Gull was not eliminated. However, I find it hard to believe that these observers would pass up an Iceland Gull.

A-D: This is a sketchy documentation and more details certainly would be of value. More information on coloration of gull would be helpful and certainly tail pattern information is needed. Howerver, I feel that the brief description does describe a Thayer's Gull and that body color of brown or tan would eliminate barely the consideration of a first year Iceland Gull.

NA: Possibility of Iceland remains-no mention of tail pattern or detail of wingtips.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-45

What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1 imm (1st yr)

Location? Credit Island harbor

Type of Habitat? ice covered Miss. River backwater

When? date(s): Nov. 24, 1989 time: 8:45 - 8:50 AM, 3:30 PM to 3:45 PM.

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, Ia. 52803

Others with you: 1st obs - Jim Fuller, Brian Covey & Louis Kleiss 2nd obs. - T.H. Kent, John Daniels, Ken Louder

Others before or after you: none to my knowledge

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.

Notes from p.m. obs. - longest + most careful of the two.
First year gull, body flecked brown on tan all over. Bill black, legs pinkish, eye dark. In flight from above wings and body light to tips of primaries, below silvery well into primaries. Brown "smudge" behind eye. Bill a bit smaller than nearby Herrings. Size same as Herring Gulls.

Similar species: how eliminated: Herring Gull - dark brown primary tips, lacked silvery below wings, lack smudge on head.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? none stated
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
A.M. - 80 m - 100 m est 30X scope, 10X40 binocs - Zeiss sun behind obs. AM, to side at 90°, light
P.M. 75 m. est. 20X scope, " " " " cloud cover, PM.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:
Have seen in Canadian arctic many times, several previous Ia & Il. obs.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 1 hr. this form completed? 2 hrs.

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