

Thayer's Gull
13 Dec 1988
Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA
*Ann Johnson
IBL 59:52, 77

Record Number: 88-38
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:52
Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

NA. Against 1) Bill size not mentioned should have been evident for 100' 2) Length of observation for 1) Pink legs 2) Dark eye.

NA. Very possibly Thayer's, but Herring and Iceland not adequately eliminated. Herring can have a dark eye and a very rounded head like this bird. I need a more detailed description of wing pattern to eliminate Iceland.

A-D. Eye color and wing tip very difficult to see, but at 100 feet, even though for only two minutes, this is possible. Head shape is a "soft" criterion for me.

A-D. Very good description of adult Thayer's Gull, adequately eliminating other species.

A-D. Pink legs, size, dark eyes, underwing OK for ad. Thayer's. I didn't like sloppy description of primaries, however.

REVOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D. The combination of features seems conclusive. Was the "rounded" head in comparison to Ring-billed Gulls?

A-D. Dark eye seems to be diagnostic.

NA. I admit the bird could have been a Thayer's, but it also could have been a Herring. I need a better description of the wing pattern before I am convinced.

NA. We are not told whether the bird was standing, flying or both. The wing description sounds like it were flying. The head description sounds like a sitting bird. An adult Thayer's Gull is very rare in Iowa and a two-minute look seems hardly enough to see it well. I would like to have multiple sightings over time to coinfirm such a rare and difficult identification. If I made the observations reported here and could not relocate the bird, I would judge it to be an interesting possibility and forget it. Head shape is subjective. Eye color would be very hard to see at 100 yards, besides one needs to see speckled brown iris. Would like to see drawing of wing (upper).

A-D. I think Herring is adequately ruled out by coloration of underwing and I think Iceland is eliminated by small amount of black in primaries should be dark gray or lighter.

NA. I am still worried by primary description--'small amount of black' would eliminate Thayer's. I agree with second NA on this. Is date a little early to expect adult Thayer's? Do we know? Brief look a problem, although close distance should have allowed better description of primary pattern and coloration.

SENT TO: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-38

Species: Thayer's Gull - adult

Location: below dam - Lake Red Rock, Marion Co., IA

Habitat: dam on Des Moines River forming reservoir; open river with islands

Date(s): 12/13/88

Time: 3:01 pm to 3:03 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: 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 behavior and voice. This gull looked "larger than ring-billed" with which it was feeding. The bird had a "white head and tail" with a distinctively more "rounded head." The mantle was a "light gray" as were the flight feathers which had a few white mirrors and "a small amount of black on the tips of the primaries." The "legs were pink, bill was yellow and eye was dark." I was able to get the scope on the bird for just long enough to ascertain the eye color. The underside of the wing was "very light, silvery, with just a trace of dark gray (not black) on the tip of the primaries.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Ring-billed eliminated by size and leg color. Herring eliminated by head shape and eye color. Iceland eliminated by eye color, mantle color, and size and shape of head.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

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

Partly cloudy with sun low behind the dam. Observed at an estimated 100' through scope at 30x and 7x26 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Life bird. Many hours of observation of other species of gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None prior to field notes; National Geographic Field Guide, Audubon Master Guide, and other guides consulted prior to completion of this form.

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