

Iceland Gull

6 Apr 1996

Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

*Jim Sinclair

IBL 66:104; 67:82

Record Number: 96-19

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Sinclair, 810 N. B St., Indianola [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:104

Records Committee: IBL 67:82

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

NA, The gull is most likely an Iceland. The reported size alone eliminates even Thayer's. However, I am unclear as to the color of the primaries, whether the bird was seen in flight or sitting, and the reported distance. The first winter Icelands I have seen have definite silvery white primaries. Insignificant to this sighting the reported distance of 220 yards for a gull seen below the Red Rock dam is puzzling to me. I would have thought a closer view could have been obtained.

A-D, All black bill, coloration, tail and primary description eliminates other contenders. Interesting that there was no noticeable darker color in the primaries or tail. April date may explain this as the bird was molting to second summer.

A-D, Features noted place this bird at the light end of Iceland Kumlien's-Thayer's cline. Absence of significant tail band and darker primaries sufficient to ID as Iceland.

REVOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D, The description of the primaries and tail eliminate Thayer's Gull.

NA, I am unclear as to the color of the primaries, whether the bird was seen in flight or sitting, and the reported distance. The first winter Icelands I have seen have definite silvery white primaries.

NA, Although the description sounds good for Iceland, I agree with Brock that tertial pattern is a necessity for absolute certainty.

A-D, For a first-year all light-colored gull, the all black bill excludes Glaucous and the lack of tail band excludes Thayer's. I am bothered by the date, distance, and description that does not give the reader a picture of how well the bird was seen and presents primary data under "similar species."

NA, Change of vote after considering note from Ken Brock and comments of other committee members.

A-D, A photograph of a dark-extreme 1st-winter Kumlien's Gull (Birding 23:256) shows the tertials without dark centers. A drawing of a 1st-winter Thayer's Gull (Birding 12:200) shows dark-centered tertials in this species. The difference is somewhat analogous to the tail-barring in Eastern vs. Western Meadowlarks. This is the difference Ken Brock mentioned, I

presume. However, I cannot agree to dismiss this documentation based on a character not mentioned by the observer, even if its mention would "nail" the identification. I doubt it would be based on the presumed overlap in plumage characters of these two "species", which may be merely a cline of the same species. Because they are clinal, birds from the area of range overlap, probably showing features of both "species", should appear in Iowa with equal likelihood, assuming that some of our birds come from the zone of overlap. I believe the overall impression of the bird's plumage, especially the "no noticeable darkening of the primaries or in the tail" is satisfactory documentation for an Iceland Gull. A bird this light in coloration (a Kumlien's would have outer primaries slightly darker than the inner primaries and a tail band clearly darker than the proximal tail, and closely approach Thayer's; see *Birding* 23:256) is lighter than the darkest Iceland Gulls (Kumlien's), and so in my opinion is indeed an Iceland.



COLLEGE OF
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96-19

10 July 1996

Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52246

Dear Tom,

Thanks for the spring summary for Iowa. It turned out to be a remarkable spring. The mid-May passerine fallout was extremely intense in the Chicago area; hundreds of birds were grounded, providing an amazing spectacle.

In addition, herons & egrets went crazy in the central states, providing exceptional counts and several first nesting records. The season was topped off by invading Western Tanagers (across Region) and Lazuli Buntings (western state only).

I greatly value the critical comments you provided with your report. Some of my thoughts are:

Neotropical Cormorant:- I used this report, it was one of several reported in the Region.

Rough-legged Hawk:- this documentation looked good and the record was among a number of May sightings. I used it.

Prairie Falcon:- Though I would have been more comfortable with the underwing pattern, I accepted Sac Co. bird.

Buff-br Sandpiper:- Remarkable record, I included it.

Red-necked Phalarope:- I did not use the Apr. 26 record

→ Iceland Gull:- Not good. Documentation fails to mention tertial pattern, which would help eliminate pale Thayer's or intergrade.

Black-headed Grosbeaks:- I did not use these. Descriptions of these females fall within the plumage range of spring female Rose-breasteds I have seen (bill color would have been helpful), and the possibility of hybrids was not considered. I am generally very skeptical of female Black-headed Grosbeak reports.

We had a late June Royal Tern at Michigan City Harbor. It was the state's first confirmed record.

Regards,


Ken Brock

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

96-19

What species? Iceland Gull - 1st year How many? 1

Location? below dam at Red Rock, Marion Co.

Type of Habitat? D. M. River

When? date(s): 4/6/96 time: 10:54 to 10:58

Who? your name and address: Jim Sinclair, 810 N. B St., Indianapolis

Others with you: _____

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The bird was 10-15% larger than the many Ring-billed Gulls present. The bill was all black, relatively straight and not large or "formidable" looking. From my vantage point the entire bird was a uniform light "cafe au lait" color. There was no noticeable darkening of primaries or in the tail. The underside of the bird was marginally lighter than the mantle and the underside of the primaries were a very "clean" off white - is that an oxymoron?

Similar species; how eliminated:

This bird did not have the large headed, large billed "predatory" look of a Glaucous Gull. The overall lightness and the lack of dark primaries and no tail band would eliminate Thayers Gull.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____
If yes, explain: _____

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Lighting was good - distance estimated at 220 yds.
10x42 field glasses

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have looked at numerous Iceland, Thayers and Glaucous gulls

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Brief look at AGFG

How long before field notes made? 10 min this form completed? 4 days

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