

Iceland Gull

14 Feb 1993

Credit Island, Scott Co., IA

*Ann Johnson

first-winter; IBL 63:49, 64:68

Record Number: 93-06

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk 50211

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:49

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D, The description of this bird appears close to Figures 4 and 5 in Zimmers "Plumage Variation in Kumlien's Iceland Gull" (Birding XXIII:5); that is, on the darker extreme of Iceland Gulls. I agree with Ann that perhaps an intergrade cannot be ruled out, but checkered tertials and lack of secondary wing bar would seem to indicate Iceland.

A-D, Birding (Vol. 23, #5, Pg. 263) shows a photo of a "hooded" Iceland as described by Johnson. While certainly not diagnostic or even necessarily supportive, it does suggest a good view was obtained of this bird.

NA, The overall color of this bird seems to be too gray for a first-winter Iceland Gull. Seems to me that the tail pattern and primary description fits a first-winter Thayer's Gull like pictured on page 143 of Harrison's Seabirds book.

NA, I believe that this bird was about 95% Iceland Gull as indicated by the long primary projection, lightly mottled tertials, short legs, pale primaries, bill shape, and overall coloration. The bill color and heavy barring on the tail, rump, and undertail coverts are indicative of a first-winter bird. The duskiess on the face could imply a beginning molt to first alternate plumage (see photo on Figure 11 of Birding, October 1991). After review of the literature, the narrow dusky edging on the outer primaries as seen from below remains a problem for pure Iceland and may well represent an intergrade.

A-D, I cannot improve on the documentor's analysis of this record. The non-uniformity of appearance is likely due to molt.

REVOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

NA, I am unsure what we are voting on in this round. Are we voting that this is an absolutely pure Iceland Gull? If so, I'll vote NA. If we are voting that this gull was mostly Iceland or an Iceland/Thayer's, I'd vote to accept.

A-D, This is a good, thorough description of an Iceland Gull. One NA voter objects on the basis of a painting in Harrison. While Harrison's text is excellent, I feel his art is heavy handed, including that of the Thayer's Gull. The other NA voter feels it's 95% Iceland. Close enough for me.

A-D, The details describe the bird pictured in birding referred to by several reviewers. The long primary extension and lack of a secondary bar make it hard to rule out Iceland.

A-D, According to Zimmer, checkered tertials and lack of secondary bar do indeed indicate Iceland Gull so I will change my vote.

A-D, In spite of the fact that the documentor takes a conservative view, I would put this in the Iceland basket based on tail and primaries on sitting bird. Maybe 95% is good enough for a species that is about to be lumped.

A-D, One NA review says the overall color of this bird seems to be too gray for a first-winter Iceland. I say that the overall gray color indicated by the observer is a very pale or as noted in Harrison, Seabirds, 1982, a biscuit white or gray white color is what she is describing. Most appear to be a pale tan color but this bird, whether because of lighting or actual color due to molt or feather wear was a more cool gray color overall.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Iceland Gull - first winter

Location: Credit Island, Davenport, Scott County, IA

Habitat: Frozen lagoon with small amount of open water

Date: 14 February 1993

Time: 13:15 to 13:40

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

Other observers: None at the time

Description of bird: This gull was standing with Herring and Ring-billed Gulls and was intermediate in size. The overall coloring was a cold gray/white. The head was gray and even a bit duskier from below the base of the bill, through the ear coverts, and to the crown, giving the bird a light "hooded" effect similar in pattern to a Common Black-headed Gull. The head structure was not significantly different from the Herrings and Ring-billeds. The mantle, wing coverts, and tertials were heavily checkered in gray and white. The folded primaries appeared pale gray, the same color as the gray in the body, and were edged in white. They extended approximately two inches beyond the tail. From the front the bird was very streaked with the same gray. Heavy barring was evident on the undertail coverts. The eye was black. The bill seemed to be nearly all black with just a small amount of lightening to the base. The bill was thinner than the nearby Herrings with no bulbous tip, but the general structure (gonys) was that of the larger three to four year gulls. The legs and feet were flesh to pink, lighter than the Herring Gulls. They seemed short as the belly of this bird was much closer to the ground than either the Herrings or Ring-billeds. From above in flight, the primaries continued to appear pale gray. The body was havily checked with white and gray and the secondaries and tertials were mottled. They had considerably more white in them which gave them a slightly lighter overall appearance. The rump and tail were heavily barred with gray and a light gray tailband was evident. The tailband was not complete, however, and seemed more mottled. From below the undertail coverts and tail were heavily barred with gray on white. The flight feathers were translucent white, but the outer three primaries showed the tiniest light gray edge. The inner wing was mottled gray and white, matching the overall color of the rest of the body.

Similar species and how eliminated: Although the duskiess on the face had somewhat of a "hooded" effect, any of the hooded gulls could be eliminated by the bill structure. The pale primaries eliminated all but the white-winged gulls - Glaucous, Iceland, and possibly Thayer's. Glaucous can be eliminated by size and bill color. Thayer's was eliminated because of: 1) overall gray-white appearance; 2) the lack of any secondary bar; and 3) the checkered tertials. Problems with the record are the duskiess on the face and the narrow dark edging to the outer primaries from below. These two characteristics may well indicate an Iceland/Thayer's intergrade.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

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Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Viewed at approximately 200 feet (indicated on scope) through 7X26 binoculars and scope at 30X. Sky was partly sunny with sun in front and to the left. Good light.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: First year Iceland Gulls observed near the same location in 1992 and at Red Rock in 1991.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Grant's Gulls, NGS Field Guide, Kaufman's Advanced Birding, Harrison's Seabirds, Kevin Zimmer's article, "Plumage Variations in 'Kumlien's' Iceland Gull", Birding, October 1991.

How long before field notes made? Notes made at time of observation

How long before this form completed? Same evening on return home