

Thayer's Gull

21 Dec 1986

Lock and Dam 19, Lee Co., IA

\*R. Cecil

1 1st yr, also 24, 28, 30 Dec, 18 Jan; IBL 57:56, 77

Record Number: 86-28

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Robert Cecil

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:56

Records Committee: IBL 57:77

VOTE: 1-II, 4-III, 2-IV

III, Good description of all needed field marks.

III, This is a convincing description, except Cecil does not distinguish between flight feathers and coverts on underwing surface. Coverts should be darker.

III, Excellent study and description of Thayer's Gull.

III, I'm assuming the "lighter color at base" of tail leaves a broad darker terminal band which would preclude Iceland Gull.

IV, I am concerned that this bird may have been a Glaucous. Size about same as Herring Gull and bill not clearly described. Was it 2-toned? (Tip may not have been discerned at the distance of the observation.) Observer did not appear to seriously consider possibility of Gluacous Gull.

IV, I'm disturbed by the pinkish color reported on the bill, also the mention of dark visible in primaries from below. Might be a Thayer's Gull anyway.

REVIEW (at meeting, 30 May 1987): accepted without formal vote.

86-28

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

86-28

SPECIES: *Thayer's Gull*

DATE SEEN: *12-21-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Lock + Dam 19*

OBSERVERS: *R. Cecil*

DATE OF REVIEW: *5-30-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*

COMMENTS: *Excellent study and convincing description.*

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

What species? Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri) How many? 1 1st yearLocation? Lock and Dam 19, Miss. River, Keokuk, Lee Co, IowaType of Habitat? River rapids.Imm. bird seen Dec. 21, 24, 28, 30, Jan. 18. As bird(s) in all sightings were  
When? date(s): identical, am assuming same bird time: various to \_\_\_\_\_Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa, 52632Others with you: Doug Reeves (Iowa DNR) on Jan. 18)Others before or after you: Don't think so.

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.

Note: The following is a composite of notes taken during observations. At all times, 1st year Herring Gulls were present, facilitating separating the two species.

Beginning Dec. 21 I observed a large gull about the size of a Herring Gull, and observed the following features:

General body coloration and appearance was a light brown--tan??--with very little contrast. This uniform coloration was evident over the entire upper surface of the bird's body--it was so uniform that it almost makes the rest of this description redundant. The important thing about this uniformity that the accompanying first year Herring Gulls had much contrast, showing whitish head, darker wingtips, dark at the tip of the underwings (sometimes), and most obviously, much darker secondaries, creating a dark trailing edge to the wings. Their general color was a darker chocolatey brown.

HEAD: Light brown or tan--identical in color to the bird's back and upper wing surface.

BILL: Pinkish--noticeably smaller than Herring's. This is pretty subjective, but at about 2/3 of the way across the river at the dam (maybe one third mile) the bill on a Herring can be easily seen through my scope. The Thayer's can look almost bill-less at the same distance.

WINGS: (Upper surface) Uniform tan like bird's back and head. A very indistinct darkening

See Attached Sheet

**Similar species; how eliminated:** First year Herring much more "contrasty"--see above. Kumlien's Iceland Gull...According to Seabirds (Harrison), 1st year Iceland is more pale, tail uniform gray. Overall body coloration is more like 1st year Glaucous--bird I saw was darker than 1st year Glaucous.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? N.A.

If yes, explain:

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

Viewing conditions and distances varied, but usually good to excellent. Minimum distance about 40 yds. Scope: 20x60 Nikon. Binocs 10x40 Zeiss.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** Had much experience this winter studying Herring Gulls. Have seen 1st year Glaucous several times. Have seen one 1st year Thayer's in Iowa (late Nov. '86 at Sailorville).

**References and persons consulted before writing description:** Harrison Seabirds; Summer '86 IBL article by Bendorf; NGS Field Guide; Peterson Field Guide.

How long before field notes made? at time this form completed? Jan 30.

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

## 1st YEAR THAYER'S GULL -- CONT.

(wing, upper surface) of the first two or three primaries. This mark had to be looked for to be seen--on the Herring it was much more evident. Also, several primaries had slightly darker tips. Again, this was not conspicuous but had to be specifically looked for to be seen. The general impression of the wing was uniform light brown.

Also noted on the upper wing surface was an indistinct "window" at the base of the inner primaries, created by the contrast of the slightly darker outer primaries and the very slightly darker secondaries (the darkness of the secondaries was apparant under some but not all lighting conditions--see below). The Illustration by Bendorf in Summer '86 shows the window and its indistinctness well.

At some times, the bird showed secondaries that were slightly darker than the rest of the wing. Slightly should be emphasized--at no time was it even close to the darkness of the secondaries of the first year Herring. The darkness of the secondaries was noticable only at some angles, and I think it may have been a function of angle more than pigmentation. For instance, when the bird was wheeling with wingtips essentially pointing up and down and with back pointing directly at me (is this clear??), the color of the secondaries was identical to the rest of the wing upper surface. The only time the secondaries appeared slightly darker was when the bird was viewed from an angle other than that described above.

WING--UNDER SURFACE--Highly uniform in color, which was a pale buff color with whitish highlights (I presume this is the "silvery" lining mentioned by some authorities). There was a very slight and indistinct darkening to the first two or three primaries, but this had to be looked for carefully. I have also seen a number of 1st year Herring Gulls that fit this description, but all have a distinct window at base of primaries.

TAIL: Same color as remainder of upper body surface except for lighter color at base.

FEET: Pink.

Also, forgot to mention above, but did not note the smudge through the eye, although I looked for it on several occassions. Head was uniform in color with no such smudge.