

California Gull

9 Dec 1997

Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

\*M. Overton

IBL 68:13, 86

Record Number: 97-55

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Michael D. Overton, 1316 S. Duff #93, Ames 50010 [\*6/9/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:13

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, First winter.

A-D, Good description of first winter bird.

A-D, Brown tail and bi-colored bill are convincing.

A-D, I have trouble visualizing the overall appearance of this bird. Apparently it was not seen in flight! Upper tail coverts should be barred. How were the wings seen? In first winter plumage this species appears much more uniform brown overall than Herring. It is hard to get this information from the anatomical approach used in describing this bird. The size, bill, and double wing bars are features of this species.

A-D, Description of wing pattern convincing and correct.

Combination of this description and bill color and shape relative to adjacent RB and Herring gulls clinches ID.

## IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

**Species:** California Gull (*Larus californicus*) **How many?** 1 First basic immature

**Location:** Polk co., Saylorville Reservoir, Cherry Glen Recreation Area

**Habitat:** On ice along lakeshore of large manmade lake in mixed hardwood forest agricultural cropland.

**Date:** 9 December 1997 **Time:** 10:20am to 10:55am

**Observer:** Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

**Other Observers:** None.

**Observers Before and After:** Eugene and Eloise Armstrong claim to have seen the bird before and after but they won't document the sighting or provide any details.

**Description:**

**Size:** Slightly larger than the largest Ring-billed Gulls present, noticeably smaller than the Herring Gulls present. (All three species were together on the ice.)

**Shape:** Intermediate between Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull. Posture more erect than Ring-billed Gull.

**Bill:** Larger than Ring-billed Gull, not nearly as large or robust as Herring Gull. Relatively straight, gonydeal angle slightly more pronounced than Ring-billed Gull not nearly as strong as Herring Gull. Basal 2/3rds dull pinkish flesh, distal 1/3rd black, sharp demarcation between flesh color and black.

**Eyes:** Dark brownish black.

**Head:** Mottled brown and dirty white with whiter areas on the forehead and chin. Dark smudge behind the eye. Nape mottled brown. Crown more rounded than Herring Gull.

**Throat:** Mottled brown and dirty white, lighter overall than breast.

**Back:** Mottled browns, no gray, almost as dark as 1st basic Herring Gull.

**Rump:** Finely barred, browns and dirty white.

**Breast/Belly:** Mottled brown and dirty white.

**Wings:** Dorsal: Coverts dark brown except greater coverts which had pale brownish tips. Primaries blackish brown with a small pale window on inner primaries (window smaller than in Herring Gull). Secondaries brown with dark brown tips. Greater coverts and secondaries combined to give a two barred effect. Ventral: Mottled pale brown with brownish black primaries.

**Tail:** Uniform dark brown from tip to coverts. Undertail not noted.

**Legs/Feet:** Dull pinkish-red, within range of Herring Gull.

**Vocalizations:** None.

**Behavior:** Standing on ice with group of Ring-billed Gulls and Herring Gulls. Occasional preening and wing lifting.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull: Immatures of both species were present so direct comparisons were possible. Bill color, shape, and size relative to head. Tail and rump color. Wing color and pattern especially mantle, greater coverts, and secondaries.

**Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification:** No.

**Viewing conditions:** Overcast, approx. 50 yards(estimate), Leupold 12-40x60@40.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** California Gull: numerous sightings including CA, OR, WA, ID, NV, CO, NM, ND, and VA! Ring-billed Gull: numerous sightings. Herring Gull: numerous sightings.

**References consulted before writing description:** Grant, Harrison, NGS, Peterson.

**How long before field notes made?** At time of observation. **this form completed?** 11 days.