

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Sabine's Gull

8 Jul 1997

Kettleson Hogsback A., Dickinson Co., IA

\*Lee Schoenewe

IBL 67:124, 68:86, Schoenewe 1998

Record Number: 97-28

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Lee A. Schoenewe, 518 W 4th St., Spencer [\*10/1/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:124

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

Schoenewe, L. A. 1998. Summer Sabine's Gull Record. IBL  
68:103-104.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, An unusual date but description sounds good.

A-D, Sabine's Gull undergoes a complete spring molt and reaches near adult plumage in the 1st summer. First alternate plumage lacks a complete hood, but Grant shows a yellow-tipped bill--a feature not noted on this bird. Although this may be the most unusual date/plumage for Sabine's Gull in the mid-continent, there are other scattered spring and summer records.

A-D, Unusual occurrence date, but description and aging seem OK.

Stiles, F. G. 1972. Age and sex determination in Rufous and Allen hummingbirds. *Condor* 74:25-32.

Stone, L. 1995. In from the cold for lost hummingbird. *Des Moines Register*, 29 Nov 1995.

211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246

### RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD IN DICKINSON COUNTY

RUTH WINEBRINNER

On a beautiful summer morning, 21 August 1996, my husband Ed and I were enjoying breakfast on the deck of our home on the north shore of Spirit Lake in Dickinson County. My husband commented that he had seen a funny looking hummingbird that appeared brown. In a few minutes I saw the bird at our feeder and immediately got out my binoculars and field guide. After watching the bird for several minutes, I was sure that I was looking at a male Rufous Hummingbird. The most obvious difference from the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that regularly visit our feeders was that much of its body including its back, tail, and belly were copper orange in color. The throat was a bright iridescent reddish orange with a band of white separating the throat from the copper orange of the belly.



I watched the bird for about an hour that afternoon as it fed at the hummingbird feeder and then flew to a nearby tree where it perched and preened. I called the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the next morning Ed Thelen came by and photographed the bird. On the 23rd, the bird spent much of its time perched on a barbed wire fence 15 feet from the feeder and challenged any hummingbird that came close to the feeder. My husband raises flowers, and the Rufous Hummingbird took over a bed of red salvia near the feeder. He also visited the grape jelly we had at our feeder station. I last saw the Rufous Hummingbird about 10 a.m. on the 23rd but during the 2 1/2 days he was there, I did little else but watch him. He brought much joy to me and the others who got to see him during this once-in-a-lifetime happening.

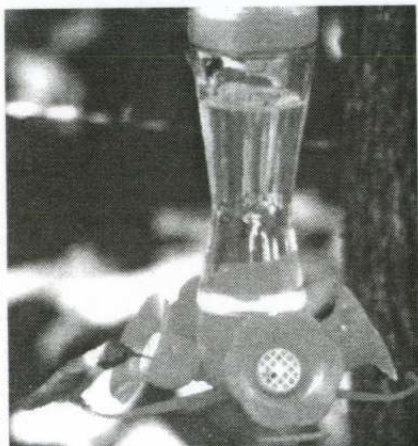


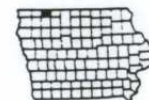
Fig. 1. Rufous Hummingbird at Spirit Lake, 22 Aug. 1996. Ed Thelen.

24535 104th Street, Spirit Lake, IA 51360

### ANOTHER BLACK-HEADED GULL IN DICKINSON COUNTY

MARK PROESCHOLDT

In 1997, for the third summer out of four years, an adult Black-headed Gull appeared in Dickinson County. The first sighting in Dickinson County was August 1994 when two adults and one juvenile were seen. In June and July of 1996, an adult was seen, and in July 1997 an adult was seen.



On the morning of 16 July 1997, Ed Thelen literally tracked me down in my car when he caught up to me with his vehicle and told me that he had just seen an adult Black-headed Gull at the Jemmerson Slough area in Dickinson County. This gull had been seen by others for some days prior to 16 July and had been reported to the Birdline.

I located the gull around 10:20 a.m. It was at a small wet area across the road from Jemmerson Slough where there was land available for gulls to roost. The gull had a noticeable dark brown head similar to the shape of a Bonaparte's Gull's hood that ended higher up on the back of the neck than does the hood of a Franklin's Gull. It had a dull red bill, red inside its mouth, and was smaller than Ring-billed Gulls that were with it. It had a light gray back. From a distance of 130 yards, I could see no white eye crescents with my scope while the eye crescents of nearby Franklin's Gulls were very vivid.

I saw it fly over a nearby pond, and the wings looked long. I could see dark smudges at the ends of the underwings and also white slashes or small wedges (like a Bonaparte's Gulls) at the tips of the upper wings. It also had a bright white leading edge on the upper wings.

This is the fifth record of a Black-headed Gull in Iowa. The other two sightings were November 1989 at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County and November 1994 at Big Creek State Park in Polk County.

P. O. Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

### SUMMER SABINE'S GULL RECORD

LEE A. SCHOENEWE

On 8 July 1997, the Northern Iowa Prairie Lakes Audubon chapter met at Mini Wakan State Park at the north end of Spirit Lake in Dickinson County. After a picnic supper and meeting, the group discussed doing a little birding. On 4 July, I had found, for the second year in a row, a Black-headed Gull hanging out with about 100 Franklin's Gulls at the swan pen wetland enclosure at the Hogsback WPA area (see note by Proescholdt in this issue). Some people had never seen the gull, and it is always a good spot, so off we went.



We set up the scope and found the Black-headed Gull. As people took turns with the view in the scope, I scanned the other gulls in the area. I then noticed a small gull flying over the water and alighting on the surface to feed. The behavior along with the distinctive black, white, and gray wedge-shaped pattern of the wings and back in flight identified it as a Sabine's Gull.

The tail was short, white and slightly forked, and the legs were black. The hood was dark gray with indistinct white splotches, and the bill was all dark which led me to conclude that this was a first-summer bird in alternate plumage.

Sabine's Gull is a casual fall migrant in the interior United States and, according to *Birds in Iowa*, the few birds to be found in spring and July are presumed to be migrating adults. A first-summer bird and a first summer date for Iowa made this sighting particularly significant. This was the second sighting of a Sabine's Gull in Dickinson County with the first being an immature bird photographed by Ed Thelen on 2 October 1996.

For me and the group of people attending the July Audubon chapter meeting, it was a rare summer gull experience times two!

518 W 4th Street, Spencer, IA 51301

## PINE GROSBEAK IN IDA COUNTY

CURTIS L. RECTOR

At 2:15 p.m. on 5 November 1997, while driving my bus route, I saw a chunky, pinkish colored bird in a fruit tree near Somerset Apartments in Holstein. Its wings were black with white wingbars, and the beak was dark-colored, strong, and thick, suggesting that it was a grosbeak. The bird appeared to be quite tame as it continued consuming fruit from the tree. Due to the nature of my job, I could only watch it for a moment. After I finished my route, I checked a field guide and confirmed the bird's identity as an adult male Pine Grosbeak.

The next day, at 2:10 p.m., I saw the bird again in the same location and watched it for about five minutes as it ate fruit from the tree. This time I noticed a very bright patch of crimson on its rump near the base of the tail feathers. I saw the bird again at 3:45 p.m. and returned at 4:15 p.m. with my camera. I parked my car at the curb near the tree where the bird was feeding. I stayed in my car, rolled the window down, zoomed in at 210 mm., and took eight photos of the Pine Grosbeak, some as close as about 15 feet from where I was sitting. Fortunately, all eight photographs came out well and helped confirm my identification of the bird.

I saw the bird again several times on 7 November. It was still at the same location, feeding on some very small apples with fruits about 3/4 inches in diameter. This appears to be the first report of a Pine Grosbeak in Ida County and one of the few reports of the species in Iowa during the 1990s.

1531 Harvest Avenue, Holstein, IA 51025-8117

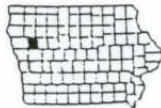


Fig. 1. Pine Grosbeak in Ida County. 6 Nov. 1997. Curtis Rector.

## COMMON EIDER IN MARION COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 27 January 1995 I received a call from Tim Schantz about a female eider along the Des Moines River below the Red Rock Reservoir dam in Marion County. Jim Dinsmore and I arrived at 1:45 p.m. and quickly found the bird. We were able to study it at fairly close range until 3:05 p.m. with several other birders. When we left, we concurred with Schantz's conclusion that the bird was an adult female Common Eider.



The following description was written during the observation. The bird was a very large duck; it was longer, broader, and larger-headed than a Mallard. The bird had a pale head and sides and a dark back. The head was tan-colored with a dark line extending from the base of the upper mandible over the crown and down the back of the neck. There was a faint pale line above the eye. The cheek was pale-colored. The bill was longer than the length of the head, thick, and dark. The upper mandible had a flat surface. The upper surface of the bill was nearly flat with top of head, although there was a slight "bump" on the forehead. The bill had a slightly bulbous tip. Feathering extended down the sides of the upper mandible to a point just posterior to the nostril. The eye was dark and positioned near the top of the head. The throat and chin appeared pale tan-colored. The breast was tan with darker (black/dark brown), narrow, horizontal barring. There was a sharp line of contrast between the pale throat and the barred breast. The flanks were also tan with darker vertical barring. This vertical barring was continuous, unlike the darker chevrons that mark the flanks of female and immature King Eiders. The back and upperwings were very dark brown/black. When the bird flapped its wings, I noted that both surfaces of the wing were dark and had no visible wingbars or patches. The axillars were white. The vent was also barred, the pattern appearing similar to that on the flanks. The rectrices were dark brown/black, with at least the central two feathers appearing worn. Based on these features, the bird was identified as a Common Eider in female or immature plumage. The prominent dark barring on the flanks and breast, coupled with the

pattern of the tail and lack of pale tips to the wing coverts, indicate the bird was an adult female in eclipse plumage. Based on the very pale color on the head and flanks, we identified this bird as the pacific subspecies *v-nigra*. The eastern subspecies *nigricens* typically shows a large amount of reddish-brown color on the head and flanks, very unlike the color of this bird.



Fig. 1. Common Eider at Red Rock Reservoir, 29 Feb. 1995. Reid Allen.

The eider remained at this location through 7 April 1995 (*Iowa Bird Life* 65:71, 1995) and was seen by many. This represents the second confirmed record of a Common Eider for Iowa. The other record is of a specimen taken on 1 November 1901 near Sioux City, Woodbury County (DuMont 1934). There are a few earlier reports that lack adequate descriptions.

612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521

97-28

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? SABINE'S GULL 1  
 Location? KEHLESON HOGSBACK WMA, DICKINSON CO.  
 Type of habitat? RESTORED WETLAND, PRAIRIE POT HOLE  
 When? date(s): 7/8/97 Time: 7:30 PM - 8:20 PM  
 Who? your name and address LEE A. SCHOEENEWE  
 518 W. 4TH ST. SPENCER

Others with you 10 MEMBERS OF LOCAL AUDUBON CHAPTER

Others before and after you

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and behavior. OBSERVED A SMALL GULL FLYING OVER THE WATER AND ALIGHTING ON SURFACE TO FEED. OUTER PRIMARIES WERE DARK W/ WHITE SPOTS AT THE TIPS, WHICH WERE ALSO NOTABLE ON FOLDED WING AT REST. INNER PRIMARIES AND SECONDARIES WERE WHITE WHICH FORMED A WEDGE BETWEEN THE DARK OUTER PRIMARIES AND THE GRAY MANTLE. TAIL WAS SHORT, WHITE AND SLIGHTLY FORKED. BILL AND LEGS WERE DARK. HEAD WAS DARK GRAY WITH INDISTINCT WHITE SPOCKING AND WAS FRIDGED 1<sup>ST</sup> SUMMER ALTERNATE PLUMAGE BASED ON SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW ELIMINATED: THIS AND DARK BILL.

• BONAPARTE'S GULL - WING PATTERN BUCKHEADED GULL - NEARBY ADULT COMPARIS.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: EVENING SUN @ 100-150 YAS  
 8x40 BINOCULARS AND 20x-60x SCOPE

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

References and persons consulted before writing description:  
 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATELY  
 this form completed? 1 HOUR

Mail original form to field editor for this season.