

Thayer's Gull

19 Mar 1981

Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie Co., IA

\*Silcock, \*#Kent, \*#Petersen, \*Myers

P-0170 Rose, P-0063 Kent, P-0064 Petersen; Silcock 1981, IBL 51:67; 52:42

Record Number: 81-06

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Ross Silcock, 19 Mar

Thomas H. Kent, 24 Mar

Peter C. Petersen, 24 Mar

Robert K. Myers, 28 Mar

PHOTOGRAPHS

B. J. Rose, 19 Mar, P-0170 (IBL 51:73)

T. H. Kent, 24 Mar, P-0063

P. C. Petersen, 24 Mar, P-0064

LETTERS

Terence R. Wahl to Michael C. Newlon, 31 July 1982, including comments from Dennis R. Paulson

Paul Lehman with note by Jon Dunn, 7 September 1982

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 51:63, 67

Silcock, W.R. 1981. First Iowa record of Thayer's Gull. IBL 51:72-74.

Photographs: IBL 51:73 (P-0170)

Records Committee: IBL 52:42

VOTE: 7-I-P

I-P, should abstain.

I-P, My vote doesn't count, I suspect. Note Bob Myers' careful comment under '14'.

REVOTE Aug 1982: 1 III, 2 IV, 1 V, 2 VI, 1 reject

V, (Thayer ain't no such gull in Iowa.) (yet)

#1, the only one I saw (I assume it is the 3/81 bird), I believe is a Thayer's. Some photos were of the other bird present. What photos did Paulson have? My best imm Herring shot enclosed. Also, Paulson apparently doesn't have Grant's new book, very good description for Herring, also, he doesn't refer to Lehman's article in Birding -- he wasn't listed as a contributor. It is safer to say a bird you didn't see yourself "might" not be a particular species. He certainly hasn't convinced me.

Drop all Thayer's Gull records to IV. Nothing is positive in the world of the Larus. Let us shoot (no pun) for a specimen.

31 July 1982

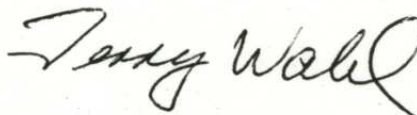
Dr. Michael C. Newlon  
408 Wales St.  
Iowa City IA 52240

Dear Mike,

At long last, here are the gull record photos and descriptions. On first looking over some photos I was almost convinced some were Thayer's, only to be "unconvinced" when I looked at another photo of the same bird from another angle (dorsal, ventral, etc.). I have been extremely busy this summer and the whole pile got buried then for some time. When I found it again (with some horror and shame) I hurriedly passed it on to Dennis Paulson, whom I respect as the best in the Northwest at this kind of thing.

As you can see from his comments, Dennis went at it and started his comments without all his references handy, so the summary of this review/judgment is in the postscript(!). I have gone over the records again after Dennis returned them to me and concur with his judgment. I can take no "credit" for the review, however: Dennis did the work.

Yours truly,



Terence R. Wahl

## COMMENTS ABOUT IOWA THAYER'S GULL RECORDS

(also, underwing coverts may be too dark for Thayer's)

#1 - this description for the most part seems fine for a first-winter Thayer's, but at the same time it is not too discrepant for a first-winter Herring, that very variable species. The bill and head configuration certainly are fine for Thayer's, but it may be that some smallest Herrings could overlap this. I don't know what to make of the white trailing edge of the tail as a field mark; skins in the Burke Museum don't show this any better developed for Thayer's than for Herring, in fact it is not prominent usually. I don't think a paler feather edge would develop from feather wear, as the description implied for a Herring Gull, if anything just the reverse--pale edges wear off with time. The flight shots, which I am not sure represent either one or two individuals, to me show too much dark color under the outer primaries for Thayer's. Most (all?) Thayer's show uniformly gray under the primaries, not any darker on the outer ones than the inner ones, and the shot of the bottom bird on the page with 3 pictures shows clearly darker outer primaries, as does the bird on the other page (bearing in mind that backlighted feathers may look different). We have two Thayer's wings available in the collection here, and both of them are uniformly pale, the outer primaries exactly like the inners. I don't really know the extent of the variation possible, but I do know that underwings of Herring and even Western can look fairly pale with backlighting. Unfortunately I have no comparable photographs of first-year Herrings in flight, and it's too bad that the observers didn't try to get such pictures for their own comparison. Thus this bird (these birds) could well be Thayer's, but the descriptions and photos don't totally confirm the identification, in my opinion.

#2 - this bird again looks superficially like a good Thayer's, the head/bill shape and size identical to birds I have photographed. Note that Thayer's can have a head just as flat as that of any other gull at times--this difference is overemphasized in the literature and doubtless will go on confusing people. I am disturbed that I cannot get any sign of the paler underwing tips of Thayer's from the photos, nor does the description mention them, although it does mention paler proximal primaries (see above comments). Again, identification rests on bill size, which of course overlaps considerably in Herring/Thayer's. This bird has even less credibility than the preceding one as a Thayer's.

#3 - with no photographic documentation it becomes even more difficult to assess records such as this. The lack of "actual" Herring Gulls to compare with these birds is of course critical, and I would have liked to have seen definite differences described in underwing color/shade between the two seen under similar conditions in flight. The fact that they were 175-250 yards away certainly precludes good study. I don't see that anything discussed here clearly points to these birds being Thayer's.

#4 - again, the description matches Thayer's well enough, but I don't think it is outside the known variation of Herring, which certainly can have an entirely black bill in winter (I assume all or most of such birds I have seen in Massachusetts in November were Herrings...) as well as a variety of types of scapular edging. Again, observation in flight would have been most definitive, although not if in isolation away from known Herring Gulls. I really think that lighting on wings can be tricky, and with lots of Herring and even more Thayer's to look at here in Washington, I am confused by some individual birds. Again, probably a Thayer's but not for sure.

#5 - this is an excellent description and seems as much like a first-year Thayer's as any of those I read. I wish it had been photographically documented. Note that it matches the description of bird #1, however, and the photos of that bird aren't quite enough to convince me of Thayer's because more dark color is present under the wing than is usual. Excuse me, I just found the photographs of it. They are not at all compelling, the top one unfortunately having the underwing blurred; again, they could be a Thayer's, but they also might not.

#6 - (I suppose there is an error in the date here, listed as Dec. 1982); again, this description sounds like Thayer's Gull in wing coloration, especially the contrast between upper and under surface, although again I would have liked a detailed description of how the Herring Gulls looked under these conditions. It sounds as if the observer had abundant opportunities to compare the birds, nevertheless, and again this sighting has a good chance of being a Thayer's. Again, it is unfortunate there is no photographic record of it.

SUMMARY: On first glance at descriptions and photos, I was convinced that Thayer's Gulls were being observed in Iowa, even if all the records were not equally convincing. On detailed examination of the same material, I am left a bit more dubious, because of comments above. Nevertheless, it seems hard to believe that the observers aren't seeing smaller, smaller-billed, lighter underwinged birds with their Herring Gulls, and they may all be Thayer's. Collecting one would be a very good idea at this point, just to confirm in the hand what people are seeing in the field at different distances and under different lighting conditions. The two species do overlap in virtually all characteristics in first-year plumage, and identification rests on a constellation of characters.

POSTSCRIPT: All of the above was written with one big disadvantage--I did not have accessible my photographs of Thayer's and Herring Gulls. Subsequently I have gone through American Birds issue by issue for the last ten years to look for photos of Thayer's. Looking at all these photos has convinced me, contrary to previous comments, that probably none of the above records are Thayer's! I advise the observers to look at the following photographs in that journal:

AB 26: 445--this "Iceland Gull" was subsequently reidentified as a Thayer's (which I had thought it was on seeing the photo), and it shows what I mean about the underwing.

AB 31: 318--this bird shows the rather uniform dorsal aspect of the wings, much less contrasty than the photos of Iowa #1, and also the pale underwing tip, without the dark tip/pale window effect described for the Iowa birds.

AB 34: 266--these two birds show the rather pale wingtips (left bird is undoubtedly the spring one, rather worn) and the lack of very contrasty sections of the wings.

AB 29: 51--again, the overall pale appearance is apparent. As has been stressed by some authors, this species is at least as similar to Kumlien's as to Herring, perhaps more so in some ways. Note also that none of the birds in these photos is particularly pale-headed, a feature I found a bit odd on one or more of the Iowa photos--and of course in the West we often use the pale-headed effect on some young Herrings to distinguish them from Westerns.

I hope these comments are taken as constructive ones and especially that recourse to the AB photos cited here will be of great value to Iowa observers. There is little doubt that Thayer's Gull should/does occur in Iowa, but I don't believe its presence has been documented there yet.

*Dennis Paulson*

Dennis R. Paulson  
Burke Museum  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA 98195

81-06

P.O. Box 1061  
Goleta, Calif.  
93116

7 Sept. 1982

Comments on Several Iowa Records of Thayer's Gull

Before giving my thoughts on each of the individual Thayer's Gull records, I would like to make a few comments on my article which appeared in Birding 12(6). The artist's plate (p. 200) was never seen by me before the article was published. While it is "O.K.", I'm not crazy about the bill shape shown and the primaries on the first-year bird are too dark; this may have partly resulted in the mis-identifications I believe were made in the Iowa birds. Several of the black and white photos in the Birding article were also reproduced too darkly. The cover photo of that issue (in color) shows the primary color much more accurately.

I believe each of the records of Iowa Thayer's Gulls sent to me is either definitely or probably of Herring Gulls. None are definitely Thayer's. Certainly all the photos that accompany several of them are of Herrings. A real problem I see with each is that the written details for each sound possible for Thayer's, but that the photos of the same individuals show them clearly to be Herrings and, in part, conflict with the written details. Those without photos are more difficult to evaluate. In every case, female Herrings may well have been involved; this sex averages smaller and rounder headed than the male, giving it more of a "Thayer's" look.

Record #1 (2 at Lake Manawa, 19 March 1981):

The photos show a bird that, at rest, appears too dark overall for a Thayer's in March (too gray and smudgey, not paler brown and more flecked); the pale-headed look to the bird is better for Herring; and the primaries definitely appear too dark and lack pale edges to the tips of the primaries (in other words, the primaries seem fine for Herring). In flight, both the uppersurface and under-surface of the primaries are much too dark. See the flight photo of a Thayer's from underneath on page 205 of the Birding article; the outer primaries are as pale as the inner primaries and secondaries. The Lake Manawa birds look very much like Herring Gulls.

Record #2 (2 at Coralville Res., 7 November 1981):

The photos show one major problem with the birds being Thayer's: the primaries are too dark and lack the pale edges to the primary tips (a bird in November is in fresh plumage and shows these pale tips). They appear to be Herrings. The small head and smaller billed look can be attributed to the birds probably being females.

Record #3 (3 at Coralville Res., 8 November 1981):

Why aren't two of these the same as in "Record #2"? (which I believe to be Herrings). Not enough specifics in written details; description could fit either Herring or Thayer's.

Record #4 (1 at Lake Manawa, 5 December 1981):

"Chocolate" brown primaries sound too dark for Thayer's. Other marks mentioned could fit a Thayer's, also a female Herring. Not seeing coloration of the primaries (above and below) in flight an important omission.

Record #5 (1 at Coralville Res., 6 December 1981):

Photo of bird in flight (taking off) shows underwings to be much too dark for Thayer's. Overall coloration of bird also appears to be too dark. Appears to be a Herring Gull.

Record #6 (1 at Saylorville Dam, 10-17 Dec. "1982" (sic)):

Plumage "grayish-brown" fits Herring better; Thayer's more of a tan-brown. Pink at base of bill not typical for a Thayer's in December (but fine for Herring). Again, not really enough in description to be certain; were absolutely all the primaries from underneath a "ghost-gray"? (should really have been whitish). I believe there isn't enough in this description to be positive of an identification.

Hope these comments have been of some help.

Sorry to be only "negative" on all of the records, but they were either clearly of Herring Gulls or lacked sufficient details and could either have involved Herring or Thayer's. I am sure that Thayer's occurs in Iowa somewhat regularly, however.

Sincerely,

*Paul Lehman*

Paul Lehman

P.S. If you have any further questions, feel free to ask.

P.S.S. I'm sorry that I don't now have the time to respond in detail, but all of the photos I examined here are unequivocally Herring Gulls. I can give a detailed response in November if you want to send them back. JD

(John Dunn)

## Thayer's Gull

Silcock, W. R. 1981. First Iowa Record of Thayer's Gull. Iowa Bird Life 51:72-74

**First Iowa Record of Thayer's Gull** - On March 18 I was told by Barbara Wilson of Hastings, Iowa that B. J. Rose of Omaha had found two first-year Thayer's Gulls at Lake Manawa, and also a possible adult. Realizing that this would be a first state record for this species, I went to Lake Manawa March 19, and together with Rose and other experienced birders from Omaha, found the two first-year birds. The AOU recently split this species from Herring Gull, but many experts believe that it should be more closely allied with Iceland Gull, even perhaps to the extent of lumping with that species. As seen from the description below, the field characters are indeed similar to the Iceland Gull rather than the Herring Gull. In fact, in Iowa the field identification of this species is far simpler than for example on the west coast, as Herring Gull will be usually the only source of confusion, Iceland Gull being very rare in the interior.

The observations took place from about 9:30 to 11 a.m. in bright, sunny conditions, allowing excellent comparison with first year Herring Gulls. My binoculars are 7 X 40 Bushnells, and my telescope is a 25X Bausch & Lomb. The birds were closely observed (no further than 200 yards) both at rest with some 200 Ring-billed Gulls and in flight while feeding with Ring-bills and about 15 first-year and second-year Herring Gulls, with a few adult Herring Gulls present.

Peter Petersen, Tom Shires, and Tom Kent saw one immature bird March 24, and I saw one first year bird March 27 with Mr. and Mrs. Gene Amrstrong. Photographs were taken by B. J. Rose with results pending, by Tom Kent, whose results were inconclusive due to distance from the birds and by Peter Petersen.

**DESCRIPTION:** The first bird found was in typical first year plumage for the large gulls of the genus *Larus*: overall brown appearance, noticeably larger than the Ring-billed Gulls in the area (about 150), and about the same size, but somewhat less bulky-looking than the 10 or so first-year Herring Gulls present. The bird was first seen feeding with the other gulls, and comparison with first-year Herring Gulls yielded the following points of difference:

(1) **Bill:** The bill was mostly black, while the Herrings all had bills at least 75 percent pale-colored, with just the tips dark. The bill was also less bulky than in the Herrings, giving the head and bill together a more "delicate" look than the Herrings'. Lehman described this look as "pigeon-headed".

(2) **Tail and Primaries:** There was much less contrast between the overall body plumage color and the color of the upper surface of both the primaries and tail band in the Thayer's than in the Herrings. The very dark tail band of the latter species was in sharp contrast with the rump, causing the latter to appear paler than the general body plumage. Similarly the upper surface of the primaries of the Herrings stood out as being much darker than the mantle, whereas even though the upper primaries were noticeable darker in the Thayer's, there was little contrast between them and the mantle. The overall impression was that the Thayer's was a paler bird, more even in coloration, whereas the Herring was a darker-appearing more contrastingly-plumaged bird.

(3) **Tail:** Noticeable in the Thayer's was the pale, virtually white, trailing edge to the tail, which was lacking in the Herrings. One Herring Gull did show a paler trailing edge on its tail, possibly due to feather wear, as at this time of year some transition would be expected into second year plumages. Incidentally the bill of the bird described here (Thayer's) would indicate that this transition was underway due to the presence of the pale basal area. Lehman states that this change is well-noted in California birds in late winter.

(4) **Flight:** Probably the most convincing identifying character was seen when the bird was in flight overhead. The primaries and all the flight feathers were almost translucent, with no trace of darker areas, such as were obvious in the primary area of the wings of the Herrings when seen from the same angle. These darker areas in the primaries of the Herring Gulls were somewhat irregular, not seeming to be in the same area of the wingtips which is black in adults. The translucence of the flight feathers in the Thayer's allowed the bird to be picked out in flight, and identification could be confirmed by checking the other characteristics described above. The general flight character of the Thayer's was lighter, or more buoyant, with the body seeming slimmer or more streamlined, causing the Herring Gulls to remind me of Red-tailed Hawks in that their flight seemed relatively cumbersome. The second Thayer's Gull was identical in plumage to the

bird described above, but its bill was totally black or very dark, indicating that it was probably slightly younger than the first bird.

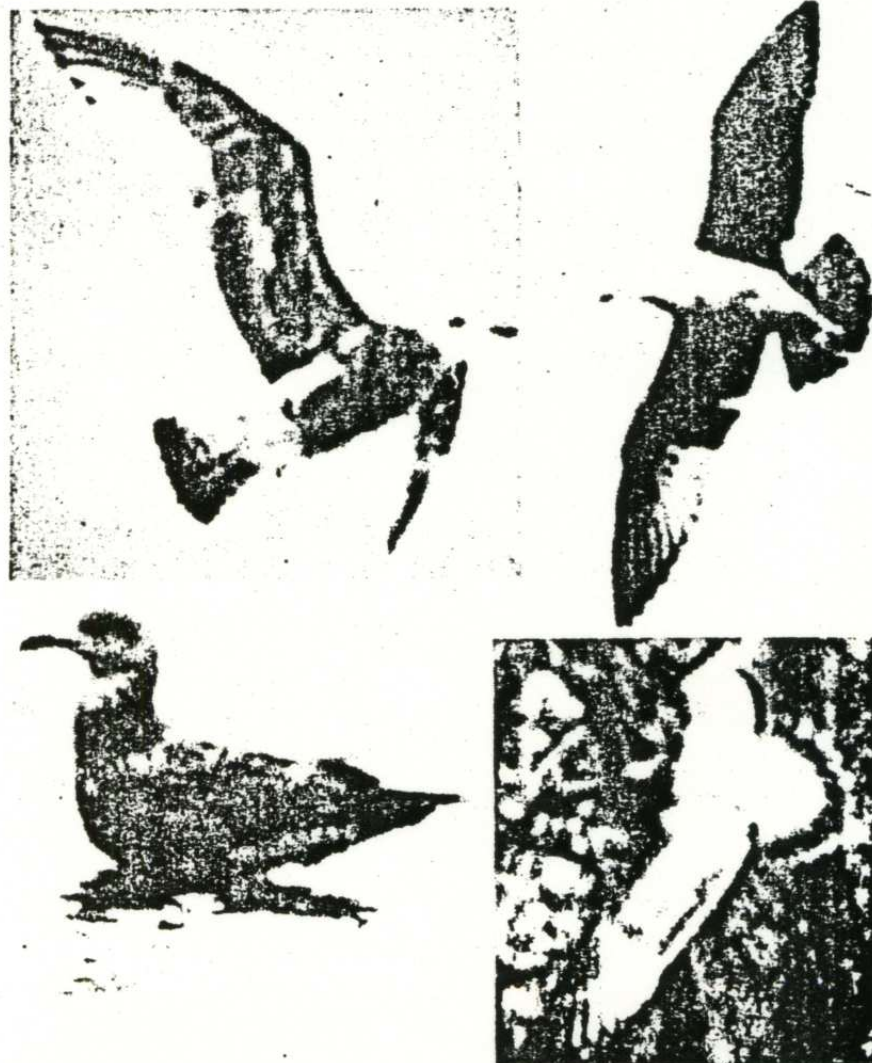
**SEPARATION FROM OTHER SPECIES:** The above description separates by direct comparison first-year Thayer's and Herring Gulls, the most similar species present. Thayer's may be confused in first year plumage with Kumlien's form of Iceland Gull, but the Thayer's had primaries slightly darker than the mantle (from above), whereas the opposite occurs in Iceland Gull (Lehman). Lehman also notes that some first-year Western Gulls may show translucent primaries from below in certain light but these observations took place in excellent light at fairly close range.

Tom Kent kindly forwarded a copy of his documentation of the bird his group saw March 24, apparently the bird with the pale base to the bill (see my description above). Additional features described by Kent are:

(1) "Wing coverts with distinct light edging on dull light brown feathers."  
"The most outstanding features noted were . . . the edging on the wing feathers giving a mottled effect (The Herrings were plain brown) . . ."

(2) "Also the head feathers extended further out over the upper mandible than the lower."

The bird seen with the Armstrongs March 27 was rather far away, but telescope views were sufficient to note the different head shape, paler overall coloration, by comparison with an adjacent first-year Herring Gull. This bird was probably the same seen by Kent's group. — W. ROSS SILCOCK, RR 2, Malvern.



Thayer's Gull at Lake Manawa  
— Photos by B. J. Rose



DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

8106 4/4/81  
SILCOCK

- ✓ SPECIES: THAYER'S GULL.
- NUMBER: 2 first year birds.
- LOCATION: Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie County, Iowa.
- DATE: 19 March 1981.
- TIME BIRD SEEN: 9:30 am to about 11 am.
- DESCRIPTION: See attached sheet.
- VOICE: Not heard.
- BEHAVIOR: No differences in actions noted between these two birds and the Herring and Ring-billed Gulls present, either while feeding or loafing.
- SIMILAR SPECIES: See attached sheet.
- OPTICAL: Binoculars were 7 X 40 Bushnell, and telescope was Balscope Sr with 25X eyepiece.
- DISTANCE: Birds loafing on the mudflats were about 50 yards from the car, while birds feeding in the nearby lagoons were between 50 and 200 yards from the car.
- LIGHT: It was a bright, sunny day, perfect for viewing the birds feeding in the lagoons. The birds loafing on the mudflats were at a more difficult angle relative to the sun, but light was still very good, with no distortion or shadowing of the birds.
- EXPERIENCE: I have none with this species, but extensive experience with Herring and Ring-billed Gulls from North Carolina. I have seen the west coast gulls, but have little experience with them, and have seen first and second year Glaucous Gulls. I have no experience with Iceland Gull.
- OBSERVERS: The birds were first found by B.J. Rose of Omaha, co-author of "The Birds of South Dakota", who was present during the above observations. Also present were some leading Omaha birders, including Loren and Babs Padelford, Tanya Bray, and Jim and Sandy Kovanda, as well as four other persons whose names I could not recall.
- AGREEMENT: All observers present agreed that the field marks seen were sufficient to identify the birds as Thayer's Gulls.
- BOOKS ETC: No books were consulted by me during the observation period. After I returned home I checked several books, but none were of much use. My main source of information was the Paul Lehman article in Birding (12:198), which I found to be tremendously helpful in identification. I had read the article thoroughly before going to Lake Manawa, although I did not take it with me.

TIME WRITTEN: I wrote my field impressions down at the time of observation, without any references. This documentation was written the following Sunday, March 22, also without reference to any sources other than my field notes. As mentioned above, current field guides are not of much help with this species.

## DESCRIPTION:

The first bird found was in typical first year plumage for the large gulls of the genus Larus: overall brown appearance, noticeably larger than the Ring-billed Gulls in the area (about 150), and about the same size, but somewhat less bulky-looking than the 10 or so first-year Herring Gulls present. The bird was first seen feeding with the other gulls, and comparison with first-year Herring Gulls yielded the following points of difference:

- (1) Bill: The bill was mostly black, while the Herrings all had bills at least 75% pale-colored, with just the tips dark. The bill was also less bulky than in the Herrings, giving the head and bill together a more "delicate" look than the Herrings'. Lehman described this look as "pigeon-headed".
- (2) Tail and Primaries: There was much less contrast between the overall body plumage color and the color of the upper surface of both the primaries and tail band in the Thayer's than in the Herrings. The very dark tail band of the latter species was in sharp contrast with the rump, causing the latter to appear paler than the general body plumage. Similarly the upper surface of the primaries of the Herrings stood out as being much darker than the mantle, whereas even though the upper primaries were noticeably darker in the Thayer's, there was little contrast between them and the mantle. The overall impression was that the Thayer's was a paler bird, more even in coloration, whereas the Herring was a darker-appearing more contrastingly-plumaged bird.
- (3) Tail: Noticeable in the Thayer's was the pale, virtually white, trailing edge to the tail, which was lacking in the Herrings. One Herring Gull did show a paler trailing edge on its tail, possibly due to feather wear, as at this time of year some transition would be expected into second year plumages. Incidentally the bill of the bird described here (Thayer's) would indicate that this transition was underway due to the presence of the pale basal area. Lehman states that this change is well-noted in California birds in late winter.
- (4) Flight: Probably the most convincing identifying character was seen when the bird was in flight overhead. The primaries and all the flight feathers were almost translucent, with no trace of darker areas, such as were obvious in the primary area of the wings of the Herrings when seen from the same angle. These darker areas in the primaries of the Herring Gulls were somewhat irregular, not seeming to be in the same area of the wingtips which is black in adults. The translucence of the flight feathers in the Thayer's allowed the bird to be picked out in flight, and identification could be confirmed by checking the other characteristics described above. The general flight character of the Thayer's was

lighter, or more bouyant, with the body seeming slimmer or more streamlined, causing the Herring Gulls to remind me of Red-tailed Hawks in that their flight seemed relatively cumbersome.

The second Thayer's Gull was identical in plumage to the bird described above, but its bill was totally black or very dark, indicating that it was probably slightly younger than the first bird.

#### SEPARATION FROM OTHER SPECIES:

The above description separates by direct comparison first-year Thayer's and Herring Gulls, the most similar species present. Thayer's may be confused in first year plumage with Kumlien's form of Iceland Gull, but the Thayer's had primaries slightly darker than the mantle (from above), whereas the opposite occurs in Iceland Gull (Lehman). Lehman also notes that some first-year Western Gulls may show translucent primaries from below in certain light, but these observations took place in excellent light at fairly close range.

Most of the studies were of birds in flight, and the pale primary edging mentioned by Lehman was seen but not closely studied.

Ben Silcock

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-a

1. Species Thayer's Gull 2. Number 1 imm.
  3. Location Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie Co. IA
  4. Date: 24 Mar 1981 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:30 AM to 11:15 AM
  6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):  
"Size slightly smaller than 2 imm. Herring Gulls. Bill all black with slight pallor at base. Bill of uniform thickness and slightly smaller than Herring. Head smaller than Herring and flatter. Slight smudge above eye, but not much. Breast soft gray. Wing coverts with distinct light edging on dull light brown feathers. Light barring on base of tail. Tip of tail and primaries dark brown. Legs very light-no color seen." These notes taken while bird sitting. Light barring on flanks was also seen. Also the head feathers extended further out over the upper mandible than the lower. The following notes were made after the bird flew and began feeding. "Primaries dark but not black like Herrings. Wide band on tail ( $\frac{1}{2}$  at tip)--base lighter and barred. Tips of secondaries dark. Primaries 'windowed' white from below." The most outstanding features noted were the smaller black bill, the edging on the wing feathers giving a mottled effect (The Herrings were plain brown), the two toned tail with barring and the brown rather than black primaries and tail. There was much less contrast between primaries and coverts than for the Herrings. Thayer's had pink legs in flight.
  7. Description of voice, if heard: NA
  8. Description of behavior: Resting at shore with 70 Ring-bills and 2 imm Herrings for 30 min, flying over
  9. Habitat - general: backwater slough for about 10 min.  
Large open lake with adjacent narrow slough. Near Missouri River south of Council Bluffs.  
specific: Lake Manawa
  10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: First year Herring Gull is the only similar species that has occurred in this area. This bird was in the same telescope field with two of these for about 15 min. The Herrings had dark bill tips with light base, thicker bills, larger heads and less
  11. Distance (how measured)? 120 yards when sitting, 40 yards when flying (estimate)
  12. Optical equipment: Leitz Trinovid 8 x 40, Bushnell 20X scope, Questar Scope +/- 50 x. distinct tail zones Wing differences noted above.
  13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Sunlight directed toward front of bird with observers at 90 degrees.
  14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Life bird. Have seen many imm. Herring but have never studied them this carefully in relation to imm. Thayer's features.
  15. Other observers: Thomas K. Shires, Peter C. Petersen
  16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
  17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: B. J. Rose, Ross Silcock, others
  18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Used article in Dec 1981 Birding before and while observing the bird.
  19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? While observing the bird and just after if flew off. (direct quotes and distances). Typed 48 hrs.  
Signature: Thomas H. Kent *Thomas H. Kent* Address: 211 Richards Street
- Date: 26 Mar 1981 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

OBSERVER WRITING THIS ACCOUNT & DATE: Peter C. Peterson 3-25-81 81-06

Date of observation: 24 Mar 1971 Time: 10:30-10:55 Weather: Fair Sky Cover: Clear

Duration of observation: 20 min. of careful obs. Bird/Sun Orientation: 90°  
*seen earlier from a greater distance.*

Exact Location: Lake Manawa, Mendocino Council Bluffs, Iowa Habitat: Lake near shore + in flight. (old oxbow lake along Ho. R.)

Observers & Optical Equipment: myself - 10X40 Ross prism binoculars, 15-60X60 Swift scope, most obs. made with scope at 60X, Tom Kent + Tom Shires documenting independently, although we discussed the points during our obs.  
*shires made sketch see below*

PLEASE INCLUDE ALL NECESSARY AND IMPORTANT DETAILS OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION, AS SEEN IN THE FIELD. REMEMBER THAT AN ACCOMPANYING SKETCH OR PHOTOGRAPH IS AN EXCELLENT MEANS OF FURTHER DOCUMENTATION. BE THOROUGH AND PRECISE WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

SPECIES: Thayer's Gull NUMBER, AGE, SEX: one, 1<sup>st</sup> year, sex unknown

Distance from bird(s): approx 120 yds Relative size of bird: bird with R-b. + Herring Gulls - was just smaller than them.

HEAD & NECK (Describe forehead, crown, auricular, malar region, median line etc.): Head noticeably more rounded than Herring (standing side-by-side). Brown patch than imm. Herring.

EYE & LORES (Describe supercilium, ring, stripe, color etc.): eye dark, faint "smudge" of brownish behind a just in front of eye.

UPPER & LOWER MANDIBLES: black, shorter than H. Gull LEGS & FEET: pale pink

UPPERPARTS (Describe nape, back, rump, upper tail coverts etc.): Brownish back, broadly edged with white, very barred look to rump + tail coverts

UNDERPARTS (Describe throat, belly, side, flanks, crissum etc.): uniform tawny, slightly scalloped crissum darker barred.

RECTRICES (Describe inner, middle, outer tail feathers; color pattern; shape etc.): Medium brownish grey, narrow edge of white at end of feathers.

WING (Describe color, length, shape, linings, bars, coverts, leading and trailing edges etc.): In flight a noticeable "window" toward tip of wing. At rest primaries darker than center of mantle. Primaries with white edge at tips. ~~At~~ In flight from below shows light underwing.

VOCALIZATION: not heard.

BEHAVIOR: Feeding + resting, in company (while resting on one occasion) of 50+ R-b. Gulls + 2 imm Herring Gulls.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Photo captured with 500 mm lens - 6 shots. - 2 in flight. Article in Birding consulted while bird under observation (Vol 12, No 6). Bird First obs. by W. Ross Silcock and others the previous week. This doc. written the next day from field notes made at the time of the obs.

Tom used an H. Gull form page.  
very slightly paler at base under close obs.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-06

1. Species Thayer's Gull 2. Number 1
  3. Location Lake Manawa
  4. Date: 3-28-81 5. Time Bird Seen: 8:30 A.M. to 9:05 A.M.
  6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
    1. Size - Same size as herring gull - one was sitting with it
    2. Head shape seemed more round than herring but not as roundish as ring bills also present
    3. Head, neck, breast, + belly of bird was light brown - back and wings just slightly darker brown - no very obvious markings on bird - primary feathers were dark brown not black as in herring - Tail had a broad darker brown band and a thin white terminal edge (seen when bird was flushed) - The rump + back were some brownish shade (not appearing whitish as in herring) - when flushed the flight feathers were light from below - (not like herring)
    4. Bill - front  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  was very dark (black?) - rear was flesh colored
    5. Legs were flesh colored
    6. Eye was dark
    7. I thought I could detect a slight shadow around the eye but maybe was just the light
  7. Description of voice, if heard:
  8. Description of behavior: Bird was sitting in very shallow water with other gulls (resting) - I flushed bird to view it in flight
  9. Habitat - general: Lake Manawa is a good size lake near Missouri Riv. + residential area  
specific: North end of the lake in mudflat + shallow water area
  10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Herring gull immature is very similar but probably can be separated by careful close observation
  11. Distance (how measured)? Closest about 50' by eye
  12. Optical equipment: Bushnell 7x35's  
Bushnell 20x spotting scope
  13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Partly cloudy day with brief times of bright sunlight - I viewed bird in good light from about every imaginable angle.
  14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
No experience with Thayer's but some with immature herrings. I really never looked at a herring immature that closely before. I hope I didn't let Lehman's article and
  15. Other observers: None with me  
Lehman's article could turn many a wined herring into a Thayer's if we are not very careful
  16. Did the others agree with your identification?
  17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Tom Kent, Ross Silcock, Pete Peterson identified the bird. I personally would not have identified the bird by myself.
  18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
Binding - Vol. XII Number 6 - Identification of Thayer's Gull by Paul Lehman  
Godfrey - Birds of Canada
  19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? Same day
- Signature: Robert X. Myers Address: 1236 Sylvia Ave.  
Date: 3-29-81 City, State: Waterloo, Iowa