

Lesser Black-backed Gull

16 Apr 1993

L. Macbride, Johnson Co., IA

\*Jim Fuller

IBL 63:75, 64:68

Record Number: 93-14

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City 52240 [11/27/93]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:75

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Dark mantle combined with yellow legs clinch this identification. The April date would explain the loss of streaking on the neck and head.

A-D, A bird slightly smaller than Herring Gull with bright yellow legs and dark gray mantle with darker primaries eliminates everything this species, even at this distance.

DOCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

SPECIES: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Adult).

LOCATION: Swim Beach of Lake MacBride State Park (Johnson County).

DATE & TIME: 16 April, 1993 (3:59-4:03 PM).

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.

OTHER OBSERVERS: None

BACKGROUND: I was checking Lake MacBride, when I saw a group of about fifteen gulls standing on the swim beach. From my vantage, it was about 200-250 yards across the lake. However, to drive to the swimming area, it is eight miles. With binoculars, I saw a dark mantled gull in the group, so I watched it through the scope for a little less than five minutes, and until I had seen the field marks. I then drove the eight miles for a closer view, but the gull flock had departed the beach, and I could never relocate the bird.

DESCRIPTION: In size, the bird appeared to be slightly smaller than the Herring Gulls with which it was standing. Surprisingly, no Ring-billed Gulls were with the group. There was one Bonaparte's Gull, and this bird was much larger than it (at least a time and a half bigger). It was also apparent that the dark mantle was a dark gray, rather than black. In addition, the bird had rather bright yellow legs. On the folded wing, the primaries were darker than the rest of the wing and back. There was no streaking on the white neck and head as would be expected in a winter plumaged bird. The bill was yellow, with a red spot toward the tip of the lower mandible. I never saw the bird fly.

SIMILAR SPECIES: All of the other larger gulls that are dark-mantled are larger than Lesser Black-backed. In addition, all those adult birds have pink legs, except Yellow-footed Gull, which has never been seen away from southern California and is larger than Herring Gull.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: It was late afternoon on a sunny day. I was looking toward the northwest using a KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X zoom). Viewing distance was 200-250 yards.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen adult birds of this species in Iowa, almost every year since 1984, when the first was recorded below the Red Rock dam.

REFERENCES and FIELD NOTES: No field guides were checked until after the viewing and field notes were taken. Field notes were written at the time, and this report was typed on April 21.