Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 09/07/93

Lesser Black-backed Gull Record Number: 87-29
29 Dec 1987 Classification: NA
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Eugene Armstrong, *Engebretsen
also 30 Dec; IBL 58:56, 76

DOCUMENTATIONS
Eugene Armstrong, 29 Dec
Bery Engebretsen, 30 Dec
REFERENCE
Field Reports: IBL 58:56
Records Committee: IBL 58:76
VOTE: 4-III, 1-IV, 1-V, 1-no vote
III, but barely. Form from Engebretsen is illegible so went just on brief description from Armstrong. Sounds like this was a sub-adult with brownish in wings and still a tail band. Size and mantle color indicates this species although leg color sure would have helped. Western Gull not eliminated but rather unlikely.
V, Banded tail indicates subadult bird. Mantle should not be all black, but neither observer was able to see more detail at 1/4 mile. Second-winter does not have a prominent tail band, and first-winter does not have a black mantle. Could be a hybrid--but we have a lot more to learn before being able to call these. Too bad this interesting bird could not have been seen better.
III, Could not read Engebretsen documentation well enough to make a decision from it. Armstrong documentation well done, describes what most likely is a 2nd winter Lesser Black-backed Gull from size and overall coloration. Some items from Engebretsen help substantiate Armstrong.
IV, Engebretsen's documentation could not be read at all. Armstrong's was likely a correct ID but more description would help eliminate possibilites such as a wierd herring gull or an exotic western gull or slaty-backed gull. Bill and leg description would have been most helpful.
III, Couldn't read Engebretsen, but Armstrong has good size comparison. Assumption that really rare gulls not a possibility.' 'no vote, One of ttem illegible. Other not too helpful.
REVOTE: 3-III, 3-IV, 1-V
IV, I agree that at that distance and a remote possibility of another dark backed species of that size leaves too much doubt about the identity of this particualr bird.
IV, while the ID may be correct, the sketchy details given do not convince me beyond reasonable doubt.
III, Would have helped if secy rewrote Engebretsen's descr. below in black ink and noted it was what he seemed to write.
IV, Lack of detail a problem--does not clearly eliminate other possibilities, although unlikely.
III, Please please please retype illegible documentations before xeroxing. I know its a nuisance.

(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

87-29

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Lesser Black Backed gull 2. Number: One

3. Location South Saylorville Overlook

4. Date: December 29-1987 5. Time Bird seen: 9:00 a m to 10:00 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):

Gull was setting with herring gull, smaller size was quite evident bird had mostly white head with some dark marks at near eye mantle and back of bird was dark brown to black in color. white ~~white~~ on rump was visible, end of tail carried light brown band legs & Bill color not ~~[redacted]~~ distinguished

7. Description of voice, if heard:

8. Description of behavior:
setting on ice, when bird spread its wings, the dark back & mantle were very evident.

9. Habitat - general: Saylorville Lake
specific:

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Greater Black backed gull, this gull much to small for that species

11. Distance (how measured)? estimated ¼ mile 12. Optical equipment: 20 X scope
distance on water generally greater than estimated 7.35 Binoculars

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
~~Clear~~ Bright overcast looking north at bird with light behind me

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Seen great backed gull on coast

15. Other observers: Elaine Armstrong, Dale Pedersen

16. Did the others agree with your identification?
Dale Pedersen agreed that it was a blackbacked gull.

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
Barry Englebretson

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Eugene Armstrong Address: Boonville Ia
Signature

Date: Dec 29-1987 City, State:

(over)

(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

87-29

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Lessar Black Backed Gull ?? 2. Number: 1

3. Location Saylorville

4. Date: 12/30/87 5. Time Bird seen: 10 30 to 10 45 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):
Smaller than Herring Gulls on ice. A bit larger than R.B. Gull. Clearly dark backed at rest (less obvious in flight). Dark subterminal band on tail. Head light grey. Bill had dark tip. Could not see leg color.

t

7. Description of voice, if heard: NA

8. Description of behavior: Resting, flying with other gulls

9. Habitat - general:
specific: Saylorville, mostly frozen, few slips of open water.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Too small for greater black-backed.

11. Distance (how measured)? 1/4 mile + (estimate) 12. Optical equipment: 20X Scope

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Bright sun to my right

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Seen here in Lost winter (11/29/86)

15. Other observers: None, at that time, others at other times

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Armstrongs

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
National Geographic

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 4 hours

Ben Engebretsen Address:
Signature

Date: 12/30/87 City, State:

Addendum: A belated report of a possible Slaty backed gull in Minneapolis a couple days prior reached us. I could not say this was or was not a Slaty Backed. (over)
(Or) -- for that matter, a Western)