

Great Black-backed Gull
18 Dec 1988
Lock and Dam 15, Scott Co., IA
*P. Petersen, *J. Fuller
also 19 Dec; IBL 59:42, 52, 77

Record Number: 88-43
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Peter C. Petersen, 18 Dec
Jim Fuller, 19 Dec

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:42, 52
Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 5 A-D, 1 NA, 1 abstain

A-D. The combination of black mantle, leg color, "heavy" bill, and large size are all consistent with Great Black-backed Gull. I wish the observers would have considered and eliminated other dark-mantled gulls.

A-D. Observers on the Mississippi should give exact details on location of bird. "Larger than Herring Gull" is not very specific.

A-D. Both documentations describe this species very well. They both do a very good job of describing all necessary field marks necessary to describe an adult Great Black-backed Gull.

NA. Generally acceptable for GrBB Gull. However, nothing eliminates Slaty-backed. Only Petersen saw bird flying, but did not describe features to eliminate Slaty-backed. February observations of the latter species (normally not to be considered a possibility!) cast doubt on this identification. While Petersen says head was white, Fuller says it was streaked 'on neck and back of head', just as was Slaty-backed.

REVOTE: 4 A-D, 2 NA, 1 abstain

A-D. Size larger than Herring would weigh against Slaty-backed Gull although I agree a better size description would be helpful. My minimal experience is that a Great Black-backed appears monstrous compared to Herrings. This is a very noticeable difference and one should be able to describe it in some way. This and several other gull species are apparently becoming common but they should still be described in more detail than these two documentations. Spending time on the details is good practice and it's also the price one pays for the rewards of finding good birds and having those observations accepted and published.

NA. After first accepting this record, I have decided to take a more conservative view and not accept this record. I agree that the description could fit a Gr. Blk-backed Gull, but neither observer did a good job eliminating other dark-mantled gulls. These descriptions could easily fit the dark-mantled gull in this area in Feb.

A-D. Size and large bill enough to convince me that it was not a Slaty-backed.

A-D. I think that the size description from Petersen and Fuller does make this a Great Black-backed when taken with other ID marks. I think this size difference is significant enough to

eliminate Slaty-backed.

abstain. Re. the NA vote--size eliminates Slaty-backed; also heavy bill. This bird was clearly much larger than Herrings with it. Fuller and I found the Slaty-backed and it had not been overlooked for 8 weeks.

NA. I will hold to my original comments re. possibility of Slaty-backed. Most bothersome is discrepancy in description of two observers in head pattern--one says white, other says streaked. This suggests to me that bird was not critically examined for other possibilities, usually not to be expected this year otherwise.

SENT TO: Pete Petersen, Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, RR#6, Iowa City, IA 52240 [5/30/89]

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-43

What species? Great Black-backed Gull How many? 1

Location? Mississippi River just E (upstream) of Lock 15 in Davenport

Type of Habitat? river ice

When? date(s): Dec. 18, 1988 time: 11:40 AM to 11:50 AM + 1:00 P.M. 1:05 P.M.

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, IA 52002

Others with you: Mary Lou Petersen, Walter Zauderger, Ann Barker, Don Moeller
both obs. both obs. P.M. P.M.

Others before or after you: Jim Fuller Dec. 19, 1988

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Large adult gull, larger than nearby Herring Gulls. Head, neck, breast, belly & tail white, bill yellow, eye light, legs pink (dull), back & most of mantle black with white trailing edge of wing & primary tips. Bill heavy. Call not distinguished from the hundreds of Herring Gulls. It stood out boldly when standing or flying.

Similar species; how eliminated: Lesser Black-backed Gull - this bird too large, mantle color too dark, legs were pink, not yellow.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Sun from 90° to observers right, distance est. at 250m. 10X40 binocs, zoom scopes at 30-60X

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen several in Iowa & hundreds in Eastern U.S.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 15 min. this form completed? 7 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

What species? GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL How many? 1 WINTER ADULTLocation? MISSISSIPPI RIVER ICE ABOVE L&D #15 IN DAVENPORTType of habitat? RIVER ICEWhen? date(s): 19 DEC 1988 time: 8:55 AM to 9:15 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, RR#4, IOWA CITY, IA, 52240

others with you: _____

others before or after you: PETE PETERSEN

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

BIRD WAS SEEN STANDING ON ICE WITH HERRING GULLS NEARBY. IT WAS NEVER SEEN FLYING. IT WAS NOTICEABLY LARGER + MUCH DARKER THAN THE HERRING GULLS. BACK AND FOLDED WINGS WERE DARK BLACK WITH WHITE EDGING + WHITE SPOTS ON PRIMARIES. HEAD WAS WHITE, BUT ~~NECK~~ WAS MOTTLED WITH BROWN-GRAY RATHER SUBTLE STREAKING ON NECK AND BACK OF HEAD. BILL WAS YELLOW WITH RED SPOT ON LOWER MANDIBLE. BELLY WAS WHITE. LEGS WERE A GRAY-PINK.

Similar species and how eliminated: LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL IS SMALLER WITH LIGHTER BLACK AND YELLOW LEGSDid any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: LOOKING NE - CLEAR DAY - SUN IN SE - 500 YARDS, 20X-60X ZOOM KOWA TSU-4 SCOPEPrevious experience with species and similar ones: SEEN NUMEROUS TIMES ON EAST COAST + ONCE PREVIOUSLY AT BETTENDORF.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 11 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240