

Thayer's Gull
28 Jan 1989
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Ann Johnson
IBL 59:52, 61:86

Record Number: 89-08
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:52
Records Committee: IBL 61:86

VOTE: 2 A-D, 5 NA

NA. Very risky to identify this species on just one character (head shape) that is hard to judge in flight at a distance. Also, comparison was with several Ring-bills and not with Herring Gulls.

NA. I feel there were only two characteristics that supported identification as a Thayer's Gull. The size (slightly larger than accompanying Ring-bills--although I would think it would be more than "slightly" larger) and the "very little dark at the end of the primaries". Unfortunately, there was no description of the wingtip pattern, such as extent or shade of the "darkness." The observer felt that two points substantiated the identification. 1) The "jizz" created by the small, dove head. Head shape is helpful, but tends to be subjective, and should be supported by other field marks. (My definition of Jizz--bird identification in absence of solid field marks). The "silvery" wing linings can be misleading. I have seen many Herring Gulls that seemed to show this under certain lighting conditions. Finally, the time of observation was evidently very short.

NA. Against 1) Time of observation less than a minute 2) Details to vague.

NA. I need a better description of the wing pattern to accept this record. The "dove head" may be indicative of Thayer's, but a female Herring or Iceland gull could share this mark.

NA. I don't think head shape can be evaluated in a flying gull. Seen for less than a minute. Wing-tip, however, very suggestive.

A-D. Silvery wing linings with very little darkness at wing tips good for Thayer's. Head description helped with this record.

A-D. Too vague--reliance on head shape and only vague reference to "very little dark" on upper primaries not sufficient to clinch ID as Thayer's.

SENT TO: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211 [5/31/89]

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-08

Species: Thayer's Gull - adult

Location: Saylorville Lake, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: dam on Des Moines River forming reservoir

Date(s): 1/28/89

Time: 8:40 am to 8:40 am

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: none

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 behavior and voice.

This adult gull, with white head and tail and gray mantle was flying with several ring-billed gulls. It was slightly larger in comparison. It showed very little dark at the end of the primaries from the upper side and appeared silvery underneath. Again the "jizz" created by the small, round dove head was distinctive and I believe is a very significant field mark to help distinguish a Thayer's gull from the crowd.

Similar species and how eliminated:

The primary identification was done through the size and shape of the head. Other similar gulls do not share this "dove head." The bird was confirmed by the silvery underwings and very little dark coloring on the upper side of the primaries, characteristics not shared by similarly gray-mantled gulls.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

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

Overcast with periodic drizzle. Observed at an estimated eighth to a quarter mile through scope at 40x and 7x26 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

First year of experience with Thayer's. Many hours of observation of other species of gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None

How long before field notes made? immediately How long before this form completed? 4 weeks