

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Black-legged Kittiwake

17 Dec 1997

Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA

*J. Fuller, *Overton

IBL 68:60, 86

Record Number: 97-58

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller(17 Dec), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Michael D. Overton (17, 18 Dec), 1316 S Duff #93, Ames 50010

[6/9/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:60

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, An easily identifiable gull.

A-D, Well seen. Yellow bill and black legs distinctive.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Black-legged Kittiwake (Winter adult)

LOCATION: Red Rock Reservoir Dam (Marion County)

DATE & TIME: 17 December, 1997. (8:45-9:30 AM)

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

OTHERS: Present at the time were Chuck and Chris Fuller, Aaron Breese, and Bob Domalgoski

BACKGROUND: A bird of this species had been reported at this location on 14 December. When I arrived at the Howell Station area early in the morning, we had been watching the Ross' Gull. After fifteen minutes, the Kittiwake was seen lying down on the rocky island directly in front of us. It later stood up, and also was seen flying.

DESCRIPTION: In size, this gull was roughly the same as the Ring-billed Gulls, but was noticeably smaller than the Herring Gulls. Although the mantle is supposed to be slightly darker than that of adult Ring-billed Gulls, I could not see a difference. The underparts were white. The head was rounded, with a small, thin, and unmarked yellow bill, which appeared to curve downward. The eye was dark, and there was a dark smudge behind the eye, which extended onto the nape. The legs were short and black. In flight, the upperwing was light gray, but with a black wingtip. The underwing was light, but also with a black wingtip. The tail was white and was rather square at the end.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Winter adult Franklin's Gull has a black bill, darker mantle, and lacks the obvious dark markings behind the eye and on the nape. Ring-billed Gull has more massive bill with black ring, yellow legs, yellow eye, and streaking on neck and head.

OPTICS & VIEWING: I watched most of the time the bird was standing on the rocky island with a Kowa TSN-4 telescope (20-60X zoom) at a distance of 125 feet. The day was mostly sunny and I was looking west. When in flight, I used Swift Audubon binoculars (8.5 X 44) mostly looking west at distances of 75-300 feet.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen one adult Kittiwake in Iowa, but have seen numerous birds on west coast pelagic trips and in Alaska.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes made immediately. National Geographic Guide was viewed after seeing the bird. This form was typed on 23 December.

BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) **How many?** 1 basic adult

Location: Iowa, Marion co., Red Rock Reservoir, Des Moines River Spillway

Habitat: Open water off spillway below dam; large manmade lake in mixed hardwood forest, agricultural cropland.

Date: 17, 18 December 1997 **Time:** Morning on 17th, approx. 2:30pm to 3:15pm on 18th

Observer: Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

Other Observers: 17th: Jim Fuller, Chuck Fuller, Chris Fuller, and three others I did not know. 18th: Curt Nelson, Mark Proescholdt, Janice Walter, Chris Wood, and two others I did not know.

Observers Before and After: ??

Description: (I am documenting this bird because it was an adult.)

Size: Small to medium sized gull, slightly smaller than a small Ring-billed Gull.

Shape: Less bulky than a Ring-billed Gull. Noticeably shorter legged than Ring-billed Gull when standing on gravel bar.

Bill: Pale yellow, unmarked, slender, weak gonydeal angle, appeared slightly down-curved due to pronounced hook at end of upper mandible.

Eyes: Dark brown to black.

Head: White with a dark blackish smudge on the auricular.

Neck: Slight gray shading on the nape.

Throat: White, unmarked.

Back: Gray, slightly darker than Ring-billed Gull, concolorous with inner wing.

Rump: White, unmarked.

Breast/Belly: White, unmarked.

Wings: Dorsal: Gray, outer 4 or 5 primaries broadly tipped black, black in primaries cut straight across, no white mirrors in P1, P2, etc. Inner primaries lighter gray than rest of wing, very noticeable in flight. Narrow white trailing edge. Ventral: Grayish white with black tipped primaries, no other strong pattern.

Tail: White, unmarked, square tipped to very slightly forked.

Legs/Feet: Black.

Vocalizations: None.

Behavior: Observed on gravel bar on the 17th and in flight over spillway on the 18th.

Similar species and how eliminated: Red-legged Kittiwake: Leg color, mantle color, color of inner primaries. Other small gulls: Head pattern, bill shape and color, dorsal wing pattern.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification: No.

Viewing conditions: 17th: full sun, 35 yards (estimate), Leupold 12-40x60@40. 18th: broken clouds, 20 to 40 yards (estimate), Leica 10x42.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Black-legged Kittiwake: 1 in FL 3/95, over 60 in VA 2/97. Red-legged Kittiwake: No experience.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None.

How long before field notes made? None on 17th. 25 minutes on 18th. **this form completed?** 2 days.