

Great Black-backed Gull
7 Nov 1987
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Steve Dinsmore
IBL 58:20, 74

Record Number: 87-22
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 58:20
Records Committee: IBL 58:74

VOTE: 7-III

III, Adequate description.

III, Good description.

III, I am concerned about the veiwing distance on this record but size and coloration is more than suggestive of Great Black-backed Gull.

III, Direct comparison with herring gulls, the large bill, the huge size, and the whitish headed appearance together indicate this was a great black-backed gull.

III, Good description of 1st winter bird.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Great Black-backed Gull

How Many? 1 first-winter

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-off Jester Park

Habitat? feeding with other gulls on large reservoir

Date? 7 Nov 1987

Time? approx. 10:15-10:20 a.m.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: Andy Fix

Description of bird: We first noticed the bird because of its large size as compared to numerous Ring-billed and Herring gulls. I took the following notes while the bird was under observation.

- bill absolutely enormous compared to Herring Gull-slightly longer and much thicker
 - bill entirely dark
 - head mostly white with a dark area around the eye (this may have been the eye itself)
 - underparts also white with light brown speckling on sides
 - mantle and scapulars brown with some larger, darker marks throughout
 - wing pattern (seen as bird flew around) was as follows; inner wing light brown, gradually becoming darker towards wing tips (i.e. primaries very dark)-secondaries also very dark-no light "window" seen on inner primaries
 - legs were pale (not dark)-specific color not seen
 - tail white with narrow, dark terminal band
 - underwing seemed dark
 - bird flew with slower wingbeats than Herring Gulls
- We aged the bird as first-winter on the basis of the dark bill and entirely brown mantle.

Similar species and how eliminated: The large size and dark wingtips eliminates all gulls except Western and Yellow-footed. The massive, dark bill, tail pattern, and pale body color eliminates these.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with the sun mostly behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 250 yards at the closest. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen one other Great Black-backed Gull in Iowa (Nov-Dec 1986) and many in Massachusetts.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made? written during observation

How long before this form was completed? written on 26 Nov 1987