

Thayer's Gull
28 Nov 1989
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
S. Dinsmore
IBL 60:15, 61:85

Record Number: 89-46
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:15

Records Committee: IBL 61:85

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D: Excellent details.

A-D: Reasonable identification but description not very detailed. Overall color and wing pattern probably conclusive. Tail pattern wasn't mentioned; why couldn't this also be a description of an Iceland Gull. Suggest observer refer to comments about Thayer's Gull in Zimmer (The Western Bird Watcher, 1985) and Kaufman (Advanced Birding, 1990).

A-D: Adequate description.

A-D: I find little in this documentation to discount Iceland Gull. Frosty brown if I know what this looks like would be to dark for Iceland. Also the all black bill suggest Thayer's more than Iceland.

N-A: Some darkness in upper primaries should have been noticeable. Undersurface of wing should have been much lighter than upper surface - even whitish in comparison. Head shape not described. This could very well have been a Thayer's Gull and the description is highly suggestive for the species but not beyond a reasonable doubt.

A-D: Adequate details for Thayer's Gull.

N-A: My comments on 89-45 apply here also. I suspect observers are becoming blase about Thayer's. Close observation might turn up an Iceland or two.

REVOTE: 6 A-D; 1 NA

A-D: Details adequate for Thayer's Gull.

A-D: I agree that this description is on the borderline due to lack of some detail. However, this is an experienced observer and the general description is pretty convincing.

A-D: Agree with NA's that description is pretty brief. However, it seems that the only other candidate is Iceland. Observer's discussion of similar species deals adequately with that. One NA expresses concern that some darkeness should have been noticeable in primaries. The Keokuk birds (89-44) were described as having "no noticeable darkening at the wingtips" even though this was readily visible in the photos. This illustrates that this field mark may be difficult to see, and should probably not be used to discount the record.

A-D: Sufficient; it would interest me to know what the two NA's propose this bird to be. If they are not prepared to call it an Iceland Gull then I think it should stand as a Thayer's.

NA: I agree with other NA in regard to observers description on Thayer's Gull. It seems that descriptions are becoming more

blase on this species, since they appear to be seen more often. We still need enough detail to conclusively tell if the bird being described is indeed that species. One A-D agreed that the description was not very detailed and also stated that the overall color and wing pattern PROBABLY was conclusive for Thayer's even though tail pattern was not mentioned. Another A-D says Iceland Gull not discounted. This does not sound beyond reasonable doubt to me. I still think there is enough doubt to not accept this record.

A-D: Tail patterns certainly need to be mentioned. I believe these are adequate details for a Thayer's Gull. An Iceland Gull should be eliminated by the "frosty brown" coloration and the absence of lighter wingtips being noted.

A-D: From description the only other probability is Iceland. Observer considered the possibility and eliminated based on no variation in color on upperwings. Assuming this was well seen (not clear from description) I agree bird was Thayer's. Borderline, but observer experienced with gulls (for an Iowan!).

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Thayer's Gull

How Many?1 1st-winter

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-above dam

Habitat?feeding with other gulls on large reservoir

Date?28 Nov 1989

Time?4:15-4:20 p.m.

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

Others who saw bird:Bob Myers

Description of bird:I was looking over numerous gulls feeding above the dam when a "frosty" gull caught my attention. The bird was roughly the size of nearby Herring Gulls, though it appeared to have a shorter wingspan. In flight, the wings and the rest of the upperparts were a uniform pale, frosty brown with no darker primaries or "windows". The underparts were the same color as the upperparts. The underside of the primaries and secondaries was uniformly pale. The legs looked dark. Later, as the bird rested on the water, I got a good look at the bill. The bill was all black and lacked a pronounced gonyx. Eye color was not discernable.

Similar species and how eliminated:The size, uniform body color, pale underside of the flight feathers, and dark bill eliminates other gulls. Iceland Gull eliminated by uniform wing color without noticeably lighter wingtips.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were very good with the sun behind me. Estimated viewing distance was 100 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Thayer's Gulls in Iowa, and I am familiar with Iceland, Glaucous, and Herring gulls.

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

How long before field notes were made?none made

How long before this form was completed?3 hours