

Thayer's Gull
17 Dec 1986
Lock and Dam 19, Lee Co., IA
*R. Cecil

Record Number: 86-26
Classification: A-D

1 ad, also 18, 19, 24 Dec and 3 Jan; IBL 57:56, 77; 58:74

DOCUMENTATION

Robert Cecil

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:56

Records Committee: IBL 57:77, 58:74

VOTE: 2-II, 4-III, 1-IV

III, This bird was obviously well studied and is nicely documented with excellent detail.

II, Combine with 87-02. Would be nice to know how well the eye was seen. No mention of spot on bill, so likely eye was not seen well enough to make sure iris was brown. The three observers have completely different descriptions of the wing tip. I think it fits Thayer's and it is their ability to describe it that suffers.

III, With drawing description is very good and does describe an adult Thayer's Gull as well as could be expected.

IV, This may well have been a Thayer's Gull, but I'm not really sure how to eliminate the chance of a Kumlein's Iceland Gull. Degree of darkness in wingtips can be deceiving. Maybe the AOU will solve this problem.

III, Well-considered elimination of Kumlein's. Primary pattern obviously seen well. Good documentation. (The Dec 18-19 ad. was intriguing--pity it wasn't well seen.)

REVOTE (at meeting, 30 May 1987): No change in vote.

86-26

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

86-26

SPECIES: *Thayer's Gull*

DATE SEEN: *12-17-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Lock + Dam #9, Lee Co.*

OBSERVERS: *R. Cecil*

DATE OF REVIEW: *5-30-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*

COMMENTS:

This bird was obviously well studied and nicely documented with excellent detail.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

What species? Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri) How many? 1 ad.

Location? Lock and Dam 19, Keokuk, Lee Co., Iowa

Type of Habitat? River Rapids

When? date(s): Dec. 17, 18, 19, 24, 1986; Jan. 3, 1987 time: various to _____

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Others with you: FLM on Jan. 3 (C.B.C.--view not great)

Others before or after you: No

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.

BODY (UNDERNEATH): White.

HEAD: White, with heavy brown streaking. At distance, appeared all light brown.

BILL: Small, yellowish. The bill was not conspicuous and was not easily seen in flight.

I feel this stemmed from two things...the small size of the bill and the lack of bright yellow coloration. In contrast, the bill of the adult Herring Gull is conspicuous at a long distance--most of the way across the river. (I should note that 1st year Herring Gulls were also present at all times, facilitating comparison). When compared to Herring, the bill of this bird was slimmer, less bright, and perhaps 2/3 the length.

MANTLE: Similar to the gray of the adult Herring or Ring-bill. Uniform throughout.

WING TIP--UPPER SURFACE: Showed black (not gray) in wingtip. From the point at the wingtip where the black begins to the extreme tip of the wing, this bird showed more white than black. After a few weeks of studying adult Herring and Ring-bills, this field mark jumped out at me. The same portion of the Ring-bill or Herring has more black than white.

The acutal wingtip pattern appeared to be a white terminal triangle involving the first three primaries, set off by black from the gray mantle. (See illustration)

TRAILING AND LEADING EDGE TO WING: There was a narrow white leading edge, and a broader white trailing edge to the wing

See Attached sheet

Similar species; how eliminated: Herring Gull: Bill size, pattern of wingtips on upper and under surface of wings. Ringbill: size. Kumlien's Iceland: black rather than gray in wintip (Tom Kent, personal communication). Adult Glaucous has no black in wingtips.

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

If yes, explain:

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

Viewing conditions varied but usually excellent. Min. distance about 40 yds.

Scope: Nikon 20x spotter. Binocs 10x40 Zeiss

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen adult Glaucous and Herring but not adult Iceland or Thayers.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Seabirds Harrison; NGS Field Guide, Peterson's Field Guide; Audubon Master Guide, and I might add that there is damn little agreement among them regarding what an adult Thayer's or Iceland Gull looks like.

How long before field notes made? at time this form completed? draft Dec. 18-19 Final Feb 23.

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

THAYER'S GULL --CONT.

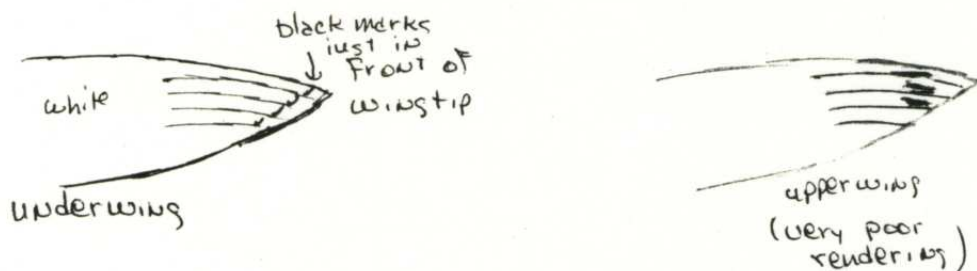
WING--LOWER SURFACE: The underwing was white to the tip. At the tip of the first three or four primaries, there was thin black strip (see illustration) The whiteness of the underwing's tip was in contrast to the dark or black of the primaries of the Herring, and was conspicuous enough to be seen at long distances.

EYE: Dark

OVERALL SIZE: Smaller than average sized Herring Gull, but substantially larger than Ring-bill

FEET AND LEGS: These were not easily observed. In flight, the leg color was quite hard to make out as birds kept feet and legs close to body, almost concealed under feathers. In contrast, the Herring Gulls feet and legs are conspicuous even in flight and at long distances. A couple of times I did notice the Thayer's dip towards the water with feet extended, and noted pink color.

(I am no artist, and these drawings may do my case more harm than good)



Final note... On Dec. 18 and 19 I also saw a gull that was similar to the one described above except that it had much less black in the wingtips (but it was black), a very pale mantle, barely distinguishable from the white trailing edge, and what I thought to be slightly smaller size than the Thayer's described above. My field notes weren't as good, and I decided not to document it.