

Thayer's Gull  
7 Dec 1989  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
S. Dinsmore  
IBL 60:52, 61:85, 60(1) cover

Record Number: 89-54  
Classification: A-D

## DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

## PHOTOGRAPH

Steve Dinsmore, P-0368 (IBL 60(1) cover)

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:52

Photograph: IBL 60(1) cover (P-0368)

Records Committee: IBL 61:85

## VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D: Sufficient details to accept document.

A-D: The wing pattern descriptions were a little confusing. Many Thayer's Gulls will show a darkening in the tip of the upper wing formed by darker outer web to 3 or 4 outer primaries. The secondary bar on Thayer's is usually sort of a striped effect because only the outer web of the secondaries is darker. The documentation says that upper wing was dark brown with no darkening of the primaries and without a lighter window at the base of the inner primaries. This would be a little atypical but it sounds like this was a generally dark example of the species. The underwing pattern description is OK. The darker tips of the outer primaries can form a sort of thin trailing edge.

A-D: Thorough documentation of 1st winter Thayer's. I had initial reservations about "dark brown" coloration. However both ADVANCED BIRDING (Kaufman, 1990) and WESTERN BIRD WATCHER (Zimmer, 1985) describe darker individuals, including dark brown (Zimmer, p. 187).

A-D: Excellent detail in this documentation suggest this observer is familiar with Thayer's and knows what to look for when observing a first winter bird. I think this is the most often identified Thayer's Gull form in Iowa. The darker first year birds seem to be more prominent than the lighter first years in Iowa.

A-D: For the most part this is a fairly good description for Thayer's Gull. If gull was seen so well why wasn't head/bill proportions used as a helpful elimination criteria for Thayer's. I have some reservations on the "dark-brown" coloration being applicable to Thayer's Gull in first winter plumage. Taken together the other field marks mentioned pretty well rule out other species.

A-D: Good description of the gull. Kaufman in ADVANCED BIRDING mentions that many late-fall/early winter birds of Thayer's Gulls are a darker, sootier brown.

A-D: Not wholly satisfactory in that this bird appeared to be at the dark end of the Thayer's spectrum and some doubts raised by the extent of tail band ("distal two-thirds of tail") and undetailed description of darkness in underprimary tips. Nevertheless overall impression is of dark Thayer's

Gull--especially unicolored appearance (head not lighter, for example) and lack of color variation (primaries not darker, lack of windows) in upperwing. Again, although this bird was a dark individual, unicolored upperwing if seen well should raise possibility of Iceland.

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# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Thayer's Gull

How Many?2 1st-winter birds

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?large reservoir

Date?7 Dec 1989

Time?2:04-4:42 p.m.

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

Others who saw bird:

Description of bird:I was birding from the Saylorville dam, looking through the 2000+ gulls feeding there, when I noticed a dark brown gull feeding with a group of Herring Gulls. The upper surface of each wing was dark brown with no darkening of the primaries or light window at the base of the inner primaries. The bird did, however, show a slightly darker secondary bar. The undersides of the flight feathers were pale with darker tips to the outer five or six primaries. The head was the same color as the rest of the upperparts, not whiter. There was a conspicuous darker spot around each eye. The tail was also dark brown with a broad, somewhat diffuse, darker tail band on the distal two thirds of the tail. The feathers of the uppertail and rump had dark tips, giving a finely scalloped appearance to this region. The bill was dark and similar in structure to the bill of a Herring Gull. Eye color not seen. The legs were dull pink. The underparts were dark brown, the same color as the head. I watched this bird for over an hour, at which time I noticed that there were two Thayer's in the group of gulls I was watching. The second bird was identical to the first bird in plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated:The size, uniform body and wing color, pale underside of the flight feathers, and tail band eliminates Herring and Glaucous/Iceland gulls, the most likely candidates for confusion.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were very good with the sun behind me. Estimated viewing distance was mostly 150-200 yards, but I was within 10-15 yards on several occasions. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Bushnell 7x35 binoculars.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Thayer's Gulls in Iowa, and I am very familiar with Herring Gulls and other similar species.

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

How long before field notes were made?while watching birds

How long before this form was completed?4 hours