

Lesser Black-backed Gull

20 Oct 1986

Keokuk, Lee Co., IA

\*Cecil, \*J. Fuller

to 22 Oct, videotape Cecil (P-0376); IBL 57:56, 77, Cecil 1987

Record Number: 86-12

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Robert Cecil, 20 Oct

Jim Fuller, 21 Oct

PHOTOGRAPHS

Robert Cecil, video tape, P-0376

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:56

Cecil, B. 1987. Lesser Black-backed Gull at Keokuk. IBL 57:60-61.

Records Committee: IBL 57:77

VOTE: 7-III

III, Mantle color, size, leg color are well described and eliminate much doubt about this record. As for the odd white patches on upper wing surface described by Fuller, Grant in Gulls (2nd edition) says on p. 19 "Lesser Black-backed Gulls (also more rarely Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls) with white patches of variable extent, usually symmetrical, on the wings (especially on the greater primary coverts) are of fairly regular occurrence (about one in every thousand adults)." This is interesting both for its factual content and because one rarely sees a printed sentence with three separate parenthetical statements!

III, The videotape supports the documentations, but detail is poor.

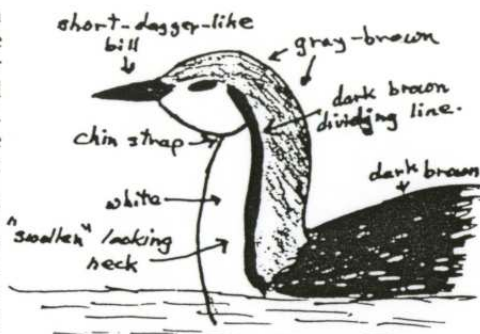
III, Very good description of this species, any other probable Larus species appears to be eliminated by these documentations.

III, The yellow feet and dark gray mantle and other marks eliminate Herring, Western, California or other feasible. I'm not sure if yellow-footed gull is feasible but it probably would have appeared larger, darker and had a longer, stouter bill than lesser black-backed although bill was not really discussed in documentations.

III, I like Bob Cecil's adequately discussed and disposed of doubts!

III, Yellow-footed and Lesser Black-backed overlap in size and are both smaller than Herring though Y-f may overlap it in size.

The whole head and neck had a swollen, puffy appearance, unlike the slimmer neck of a Common or Red-throated loon. The forehead was smooth and evenly rounded. The bird also had a distinctive diving method. Just before each dive, the neck was fully extended. Apparently, this is characteristic of Pacific Loon. I am sure this was not the same bird that I saw on 1 November because it had a chin strap and the color of the head was quite a bit darker. This bird was seen by several people through 23 November.



Drawing of Pacific Loon from documentation of Bob Myers.

On 30 November 1986, Paul Martsching and I briefly watched a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area. The bird was swimming alone, so no direct size comparisons could be made; however, my general impression was that the bird was smaller than the average Common Loon. The overall description for this bird is the same as that for the 1 November bird, except that this bird showed less contrast between the back and the head. I think that this bird was probably a third individual for the following reasons: first, it is highly unlikely that the 1 November bird (the bird it most closely resembled in plumage) would have remained undetected at the reservoir for a month; second, I believe that this bird had a slightly darker head and neck than the 1 November bird, although not as dark as the 22 November bird. For these reasons, I believe that there were three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir this fall. These records represent the eighth, ninth, and tenth reports of Pacific Loons in Iowa.

#### LITERATURE CITED

Dinsmore, J. J., et al. 1984. Iowa Birds. Ames: Iowa State University Press.  
Lehman, P. 1986. The Changing Seasons. American Birds 40:1178.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

#### LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL AT KEOKUK

BOB CECIL

At noon on 20 October 1986, I went to Lock and Dam 19 at Keokuk to check on the presence of a late Common Moorhen. After finding it, I scanned the area below the dam with a telescope to identify the gulls present. There were about 100 gulls, mostly Ring-billed with a few Herring. After a few minutes, I discovered a large gull with a dark mantle. The entire mantle was a uniform dark gray with a prominent white trailing edge to the wings. The wing tips were jet black with a white mirror just before the tip of the

outer primary. The head and tail were white. The bill was conspicuously yellow. I hurried home to get field guides, a video camera, and make some calls. One of the birders that I called suggested that I check the leg color carefully. I found the bird again at 4:30 p.m. and observed the yellow legs. The bird was slightly smaller than the Herring Gulls. The features noted confirmed the identification of an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. There is only one previous record of this species in Iowa. The bird was present to 22 October and was seen by Jim Sandroock, Cal Knight, Jim Fuller, and James Huntington. My video tape of the bird was submitted to the I.O.U. Records Committee. This is the first time that video tape has been submitted as documentation in Iowa. Although the video tape image of the bird does not reveal all of the diagnostic marks, it does show enough detail to exclude Great Black-backed Gull. I used a Canon VM-E1 8 mm video and dubbed it to VHS format.

327 S. 6th St., Keokuk, IA 52632

#### ROCK WREN AT CEDAR RAPIDS

DALE FYE AND HELEN FYE

On an overcast 30 October 1986, we were birding in southeast Cedar Rapids. At 4:30 p.m., a small bird flew in front of us and landed 2-3 feet off the ground in a small bush at the base of a railroad embankment. The bird was slightly larger than a nuthatch with a rather long, thin, slightly decurved bill. The general appearance and behavior marked it as a wren. It flew to the bottom of the steep, rock-strewn embankment and began a slow but very active ascent, hopping around on the ground and rocks except for an occasional stop on a low branch of the brush. We were able to observe the bird at less than 50 feet for approximately 15 minutes. Our presence did not seem to alarm the bird. The light eye line was distinct, but not as sharply margined as that of a Carolina Wren. The throat and breast were white, and there was a fine delicate streaking on the breast. The flanks were rusty. The back was predominantly gray with a finely speckled appearance. The tail was held horizontally, not vertically, and no tail bobbing or wagging was seen. The tail markings were not noted. At the top of the embankment the bird alternated between standing on the rails and hopping around on the rocks. Throughout the observation it exhibited a frequent bobbing motion which involved the entire body. The following day and throughout the following week other observers were unable to relocate the bird.

1758 Memorial Dr. SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

86-12

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-12

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Lesser Black-backed Gull*  
DATE SEEN: *10-20-86*  
SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Lock + Dam 19 Keokuk, Iowa*  
OBSERVERS: *Cecil, Fuller*  
DATE OF REVIEW: *4-3-87*  
METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote via mail*  
CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*  
COMMENTS:  
*Very good descriptions.*

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.

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What Species? Lesser Black-backed Gull  
(Larus fuscus)

How many? 1 adult

Location? Behind dam, Lock and Dam 19, Keokuk, Iowa

Type of Habitat? River rapids

When? date(s)? Oct. 20, 1986- time: various to  
Also Oct, 21, 22

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

others with you: Cris Pilliod(Keokuk) Jim Sandrock, Jim Fuller, Cal Knight,  
Jane Fuller, Chuck Fuller,  
others before or after you: James Huntington, Others??

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. While scoping gulls at the dam in Keokuk, I noticed a large, dark mantled gull among the perhaps 100 Herring and Ring-billed gulls present. Ring-bills made up about 90% of the birds. I noticed the dark gray mantle, darkening to black at the wing tips, some white on the tips of the first two or three primaries, and the birds white head and tail. The bill color appeared uniformly yellow. I also noted the white trailing edge on the wing's upper surface. I ran to get additional field guides, a video camera, and make some calls. The result of one of those calls was that I check the leg color closely to eliminate Western Gull.

I returned at 4:30 P.M. and found the bird quickly. On this and later times, I made the following observations: BILL: Yellow--the red gonys spot was only barely visible. HEAD: Uniform white. The brownish streaking shown in pictures of winter adult birds ~~was~~ not evident on this bird, suggesting to me it was closer to breeding plumage. On one occasion when the bird was on the water, I was able to look closely for these streaks and found them, but they were very faint. TAIL: Uniform white. MANTLE: Dark gray, not black--reminded me of color of adult Laughing Gull. Except for the wingtips, the mantle was uniform in color, with no saddle apparant. (attached sheet)  
Similar species and how eliminated: The only species I could not eliminate on the basis of field marks observed was Yellow-footed, which according to Tom Kent (telephone conversaton) is not a known vagrant. More ~~ob~~jectively, the Yellow-footed is supposed (attached sheet)

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? I don't think so. I think some that were inexperienced with the species (such as myself) thought it would be blacker. Some concern about the white If yes, explain: marks at bend of wing (see above). I felt these could be the result of wear, or moulting--most gulls undergo full molt in fall.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Viewing conditions excellent--closest view perhaps 100 yds. Optics 20x Nikon scope and 10x Zeiss binocs.


Previous experience with this and similar species: Life bird. Generally, pretty inexperienced with gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson (1980) Ntl. Geo Guide; Seabirds, Harrison; I.B.L. 55-1; Thomas Kent(Iowa City)

How long before field notes made? On the spot to one hour.

How long before this form completed? Most completed Oct. 22, 1986

## DESCRIPTION (Cont.)



A conspicuous white trailing edge was on the upper surface of the wing, extending almost to the end. The gray of the mantle became jet black at the wing tip. A mirror (white spot) was located on the the first primary, just below its black tip (see drawing--I'm no artist). At rest, the wing tips extended well beyond the tail. UNDERWING: Much of the underwing was quite dusky--sometimes it was as easy to pick the bird out from among the Herring and Ring-bills from its dusky underwings as it was from its dark mantle. About the last third or maybe half of its underwing was quite dark--the darkening on the underwings did not correspond to the darkening at the end of the upperwing. LEGS AND FEET: Unmistakable yellow. One oddity about the bird was the whitish marks at the bend or main joint in each wing. These marks were perhaps 2 inches long (guess) and maybe  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide--oblong to almost rectangular. There were two of these marks in parallel on the right wing, at least one on the left wing. They were obvious enough that everyone that saw the bird noticed them--I would guess if this bird shows up elsewhere, like at Alton, these marks will continue to be noted. I assumed that these marks were the result of molting or wear. It later occured to me that they may have been deliberately placed there as some kind of marking program (probably from the zoo it escaped from). I noted no leg bands, but am not sure I would have noticed.

## SIMILAR SPECIES (Cont.)

to be larger than a Herring Gull. As stated above, this bird was about the size of a Herring Gull, or perhaps a little smaller. I don't feel it was larger than a Herring Gull.

Seabirds (Harrison) warns of possible confusion with dark race Herring Gull. I have not heard of this race occuring in Iowa. In any event, the foot coloring was incorrect for Herring Gull, which has pink legs in contrast to this bird's yellow legs.

What species? LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL How many? 1Location? UNION GLEC DAM - KEOKUKType of habitat? MISSISSIPPI RIVER - LOCK & DAM #19When? date(s): 21 OCTOBER time: 1:45 PM to 2:30 PMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LINDVIEW KNOLL, IOWA CITYothers with you: CAL KNIGHT + JANE FULLER, + BOB CECILothers before or after you: JIM SANDROCK, JAMES HUNTINGTON  
CHARLES FULLER

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

THIS GULL WAS OBSERVED FOR 45 MINUTES MOSTLY IN FLIGHT FROM 75-300 YARDS, AND BRIEFLY ON THE WATER. GENERAL SIZE WAS LARGER THAN THE RING BILLED GULLS NEAR IT, AND THE FEW TIMES IT WAS NEAR HERRING GULLS, IT APPEARED SMALLER. THE UPPER WINGS AND MANTLE WERE GRAY-BLACK, EXCEPT FOR THE TIPS WHICH WERE BLACK. THE BODY, RUMP, TAIL, AND HEAD WERE WHITE. THE TRAILING AND LEADING WING EDGES WERE WHITE, WITH THE TRAILING EDGE MORE OBVIOUS AND THE LEADING EDGE MOST NOTABLE WHEN THE BIRD WAS FLYING TOWARD ME. THE LEGS WERE A BRIGHT YELLOW, AND THE BILL WAS YELLOW WITH A RED SPOT ON THE MANDIBLE TOWARD THE TIP. NO HEAD OR NECK STREAKING WAS SEEN. THE UNDERWING WAS LIGHT GRAY EXCEPT ON THE OUTER PRIMARIES, WHICH WERE DARKER. UNIQUE WHITE SPOTS WERE VISIBLE ON THE UPPER WING - SEE DIAGRAM (ON BACK)

Similar species and how eliminated:

YELLOW FOOTED GULL - LARGER SIZE + DARKER WING + MANTLE COLOR

WESTERN GULL - LARGER SIZE, WING + MANTLE COLOR + LEG COLOR

GREATER BLACK BACKED GULL - LARGER SIZE WING + MANTLE + LEG COLOR

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NOIf yes, explain: SEE OVER FOR DIAGRAM

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

EXCELLENT - CLEAR DAY WITH SUN AT BACKLIGHT WINDS. 9X36 BINOCULARS

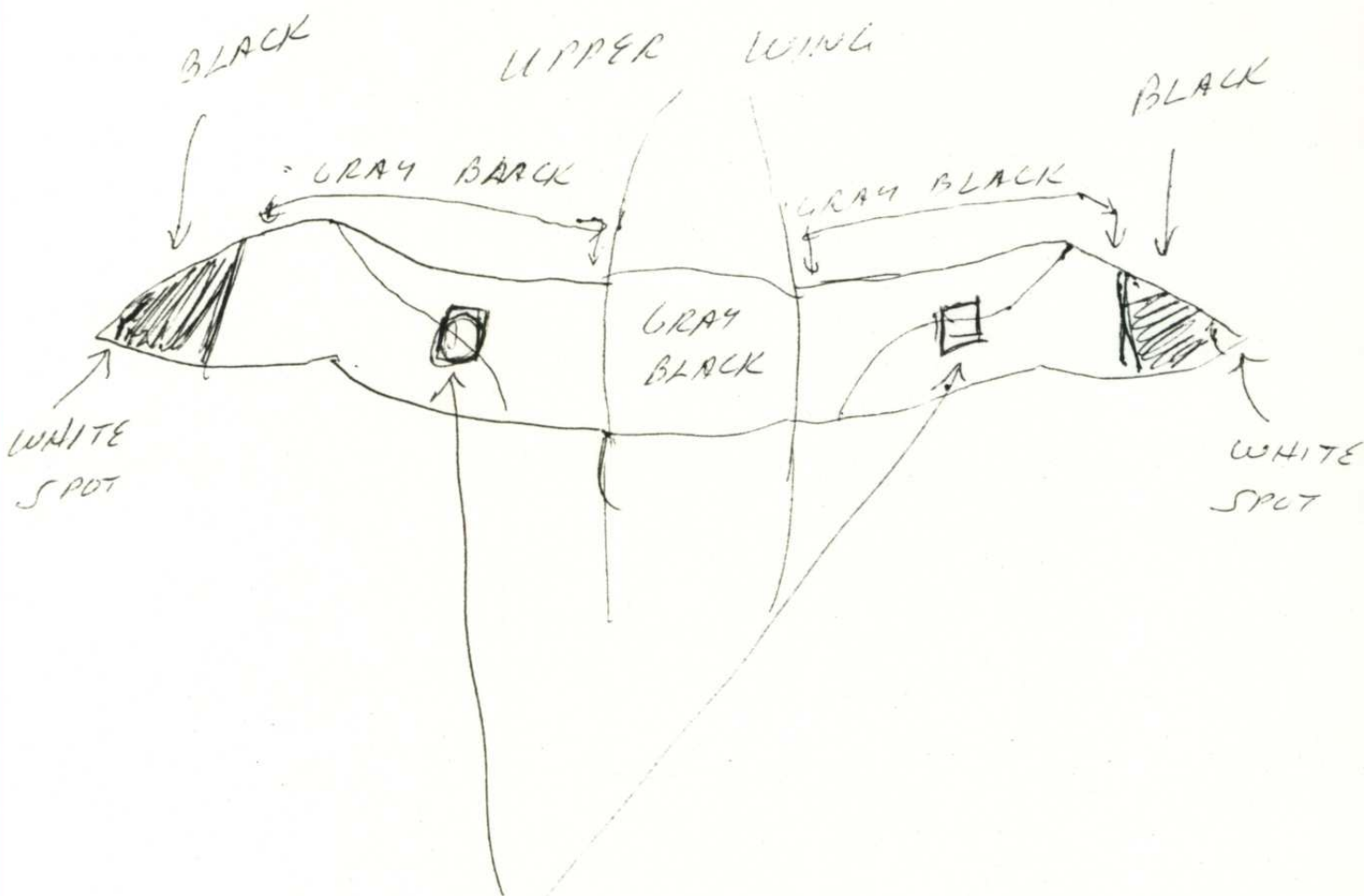
Previous experience with species and similar ones:

SEEN ONCE 12/3/84 AT RED ROCK DAM

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NATE GEEB, PETERSON, ACIDIBEN MASTER, + HARRISON'S SEABIRDSHow long before field notes made? 1 HR this form completed? 7 HOURS

86-12



BILATERAL WHITE SPOTS WHICH WERE SQUARE TO SLIGHTLY RECTANGLE IN SHAPE. THEY WERE MID WING FRONT TO BACK, BUT ABOUT 40% FROM BODY TO WING TIP.