

Iceland Gull
9 Mar 1990
LD # 15, Scott Co., IA
P. Petersen
IBL 60:64, 69, 62:22

1

Record Number: 90-13
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:64, 69

Records Committee: IBL 62:22

VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D: The only other gull I could confuse this document with is Glaucous and his comparison to Ring-billed and Herring Gulls in size seems to rule out that possibility. We saw our first Iceland Gull this year in the arctic and I felt the size was about the same as described.

NA: Description and discussion of similar species is too brief to evaluate how well bird was seen and how to assess whether identification is conclusive. This is not an easy bird to be certain about and it deserves more attention to detail than is demonstrated in this documentation.

A-D: A brief but adequate description. Combination of pale buff plumage and entirely black bill rule out all but Thayer's Gull. To eliminate Thayer's is more difficult, however. Shape and size of bill were not given, nor was wing length--both of which would have been helpful. The uniformly colored wing and tail would eliminate Thayer's Gull.

NA: Brief details support identification as Iceland Gull. However I cannot accept this documentation until we get some clarification as to which state this bird was in.

A-D: The tail description white w/buff and a narrow white terminal band eliminates a light Thayer's Gull and size and black bill color eliminates Glaucous Gull. I would have liked a comparison of bill size. I also think a rare bird such as Iceland Gull should always be flushed so the flight details can be described.

NA: I cannot conclusively say whether this bird should be recognized as an Iowa bird or not based on the description of it being on a floating cake of ice along (i.e. near?) shore just upstream from Lock 15. This same description of location could just as easily be in Illinois. The description of the bird itself sounds real good for Iceland Gull. I just do not know where the bird is in relation to either Iowa or Illinois. That information can not be extracted from the documentation. A more in depth similar species elimination on Thayer's is needed here also. Description is not very detailed in key areas of identification and elimination of similar species.

A-D: Adequate details help to eliminate Glaucous Gull. Uniform coloration on body, wings, and tail with white narrow band at tip of tail eliminates Thayer's Gull.

RESULT OF 2ND REVIEW: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D: To me the document is good enough to accept, as for

location of bird I have to accept that the bird was in Iowa or it shouldn't have been sent to the committee.

NA: I think the location of this observation is a definite problem. According to the documentation, this bird was on a floating ice cake "along shore just upstream from lock [15]". Since the Mississippi flows pretty much east-west at Lock & Dam 15, the only way to view a bird from 75 feet with the sun at one's back at 11:00 a.m. would be to stand on the Illinois, not the Iowa shore. This apparently puts the bird about 75 feet from the Illinois shore since it remained on the floating ice cake and didn't fly around. In "When is a Bird in Iowa? (Kent, IBL 55:79-80), the eastern boundary of Iowa is defined as "the middle of the main channel of the Mississippi River". Further, "Since these river boundaries [i.e., the Mississippi] were defined before navigation channels were made, the main channel is interpreted as half way across the body of water that comprises the primary channel of the river". In looking at an Iowa state map, it's hard to see how a bird could be 75 feet from the shore anywhere above Lock & Dam 15 and also be in both states. As I interpret it above, it doesn't seem possible that this bird was in Iowa. Besides the location, I still think the description is too perfunctory to indicate that this bird was well seen, well studied, and well described. I didn't see the recent bird at Red Rock reported to be an Iceland Gull. Apparently it had many features of Iceland but did have some sort of tail band. Thus, the presence or absence of a tail band may not be a simple matter.

A-D: First, I agree this documentation is brief and more details would have been nice. However, I am not convinced that any extra detail would have substantially added to the documentation. The size, general description of plumage, black bill, uniform wings and non-banded tail accurately describe Iceland Gull. Glaucous Gulls do not have black bills in this plumage, and Thayer's "are easily separated from that species [Iceland] by their solid tail band" (Bendorf, IBL 56:3). Next, the question of whether the bird was in Iowa--the observer states it was seen in Scott County, Iowa as well as in Illinois. I will accept this as indicative of the fact that at some time during the 10-minute observation, the bird did occur in Iowa.

NA: With regard to location, this record should be NA due to lack of information as to which state this bird was in. With regard to actual identification, I agree with the NA votes which express concern as to how well the bird was seen, and whether there was sufficient detail to eliminate Thayer's.

A-D: I think the description white w/buff and a narrow white terminal band is diagnostic to Iceland Gull.

NA: As noted before, it is impossible to say whether this bird is in Iowa or Illinois therefore I have to turn this record down.

A-D: Acceptable. The observer definitely needs to be specific as to which state the bird was seen in. Also, the observer hurts his chances for the birds which have been seen by him to be accepted by the Records Committee when he is so sketchy on his details of the birds seen. It would be far better to have an

over-abundance of details for an observed bird than just a few details.

1. Species: Iceland Gull Number seen: 1
 (If known) Age: 1st winter Sex: ? Plumage: 1st winter
2. Location (including county): Lock 15 - just upstream - R.I. Co., Ill. + Scott Co., Ia.
3. Date(s): March 9, 1990 Time of day: 11:00A to 11:10 AM.
4. Observers -- Your name: Peter C. Petersen Phone: (319) 355-7051
 Address: 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, Ia. Zip 52803
- Others present: none with me
- Others before or after you: _____

5. Describe the habitat the bird(s) was found in and the surrounding habitat:

Ice cake floating on Miss. R. - along shore just upstream from lock - urban area around River.

6. Description: Describe in great detail (but only include what actually was seen in the field (the size, shape and color pattern of the bird(s)). Include a description of the bill, eye, legs, feet, tail, body and wings as well as other diagnostic characteristics.

White gull with buff spotting, legs pale pink, bill black, eyes dark.
 seen standing with Herring & Ring-billed Gulls for direct
 size comparison - almost size of Herring ^{but just smaller} Gull, but very un-Form
 white with buff, above & below, tail same, white narrow band
 at tip, underparts white, buff speckled

Species: Ice land Gull Date seen: March 9, 1990 Observer: P. C. Petersen

7. Similar species (explain how eliminated): 90-13
Glaucous Gull - bird was too small, bill entirely black.
Thayer's Gull - uniform color on entire wing.

8. Describe the bird's behavior: standing on ice with 4 imm. Herring, 1 ad Herring
& many ad. Ring-bills. An imm. Thayer's was nearby.

9. Describe the song or call notes heard: not distinguished from other gulls

10. Viewing conditions:

Optical equipment used (type, power): 10x40 Zeiss binocs, 30x109w; 15 scope out riptop

Closest distance to bird (how measured): 75' est.

Lighting and weather: sun behind observer

Was the bird photographed? not ^{by me} By whom? _____ Attached? _____

11. Summarize previous experience with this species and similar species:

Have seen once previously here, several times in Arctic.

12. Other observers who did not agree with the identification (explain): none

13. List books and illustrations consulted and advice received. How did these influence this description?

Checked Geo guide, Harrison's Seabirds & Grants Gulls,
but they did not influence the description which
wrote first.

14. How long after observing the bird(s) before field notes completed? 10 min.

15. How long after observing the bird(s) before this form completed? 10 min.

Mail this completed form to: Avian Ecology Program, Natural Heritage Division
Dept. of Conservation, Springfield, IL 62701

If you have observed a common bird species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season or at an unusual location, and you wish to share this experience with the scientific community, special documentation is necessary.

An acceptable documentation consists of one or more of the following: a collected, diagnostic specimen; a diagnostic photograph; a diagnostic recording of the bird's voice; or, an accurate and detailed written description of the observation. It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.