

Thayer's Gull
30 Dec 1988
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Ann Johnson
IBL 59:52, 77

Record Number: 88-39
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:52
Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 2 A-D, 5 NA

A-D. Description OK for adult. Detail on 1st winter bird is too sketchy to be conclusive.

NA (both). 1) Size range of Thayer's Gull completely within size range of Herring Gull. 2) Bill size comparison not made or not determinable. Other characteristics support Thayer's. Due to lack of personal experience with Thayer's Gulls I find it quite hard to analyze the above documentations.

NA. Description is suggestive of Thayer's, but other features like wing and tail pattern and color of head weren't mentioned. A more thorough description is needed to make this identification.

NA. Head shape is not enough for me. Distance and lack of flight by first-year bird raise doubts. I tend to be conservative and accept only those Thayer's Gulls that are very well seen.

A-D. One of Dinsmores probably (11/30 to 12/25)

NA. I am not sure that a species this hard to identify at close range could be identified at this extreme range. From what is given by the observer and the distance involved I cannot conclusively say that either of these birds were Thayer's Gulls.

NA. There is nothing concrete here on either the adult or imm. Latter was not seen in flight, and "dark bill & even coloration" only characteristics noted. Distance (1/4 mile) too great for accurate ID, as stated by observer. Head shape alone not sufficient. This species cannot be ID'd on one characteristic, or even two.

SENT TO: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave, Norwalk, IA 50211.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-39

Species: Thayer's Gull - adult and first winter

Location: Saylorville Lake, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: dam on Des Moines River forming reservoir

Date(s): 12/30/88

Time: 3:40 pm to 3:55 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: none

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 behavior and voice.

Both birds were sitting on the ice with a number of herring gulls and looked a bit smaller in size. The adult looked primarily the same as the adult herrings with a white head and tail and similarly gray-colored mantle. The notable characteristic of both birds was the "round, dove head" which gave the birds a slightly different "jizz" from the herrings. The adult bird had a yellow bill and the first year bird's was black. Both had pink legs. The eye color appeared dark but would have to be considered shaky at best from that distance. When the adult bird flew, the underside of the primaries appeared very light and silvery. The first year bird gave a very uniform light color with slightly darker feathers at the wingtips and tail, but it did not fly at all so the flight feathers and tail were not readily seen.

Similar species and how eliminated:

The primary identification was done through the size and shape of the head. Other similar gulls do not share this "dove head." The adult was confirmed by the silvery underwings, not shared by similarly gray-mantled gulls, and the first year bird was confirmed by the uniformity of its body color.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

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

Sun low and to the southwest as I looked north. Observed at an estimated quarter mile through scope at 40x and 7x26 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Second and third birds. Many hours of observation of other species of gulls.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None prior to field notes; National Geographic Field Guide, Audubon Master Guide, and other guides consulted prior to completion of this form.

How long before field notes made? immediately How long before this form completed? 2 days