

Thayer's Gull
2 Jan 1989
Davenport, Scott Co., IA
*P. Petersen
IBL 59:52, 61:86

Record Number: 89-07
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:52

Records Committee: IBL 61:86

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D. Can only assume that observer was close enough to actually see eye color as distance and equipment were not noted.

A-D. Details sketchy but adequate.

A-D. For 1) Dark eye 2) Gray wing tips 3) bill size.

NA. Identification apparently rests on eye color and color of wingtips. Wingtips were described as "medium gray with white windows". According to Grant (Gulls a guide to identification. 1986), Herring Gulls can have very pale wingtips also, making this mark inconclusive. Eye color is also variable, with some Herring Gulls having darker eyes, rather than the normal yellow eyes. A more detailed description of this bird is needed for acceptance.

A-D. Eye and wingtip seem like definite field marks, but why was viewing distance omitted?

A-D. Extensiveness of darkness in wingtips not given; also veiwing distance not given. Description looks good but how far from bird was observer?

A-D. A good description of differentiating characters of Thayer's versus Herring, particularly mention of gray (rather than balck) primaries.

REVOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

NA. With 1 NA vote and 4 other A-D votes accompanied by less than enthusiastic comments, I will change from A-D to NA. I was hesitant to vote to accept first time around but gave benefit of the doubt to a good observer. In retrospect, more detail would have eliminated doubt.

NA. I think we are getting pretty jaded regarding Thayer's Gull, as evidenced by the paucity of detail in this documentation. In view of NA's comments, must agree that Herring Gull not thoroughly eliminated.

A-D. For 1) Dark eye 2) Gray wing tips 3) bill size. It seems to me that Grant's Herring Gull is an adult Thayer's.

NA. This very sketchy description is just not convincing to me. As I pointed out in my earier comments, eye color is not definitive for distinguishing Herring and Thayer's gulls. The rest of the description really dosen't say much. Neither the wing pattern nor the bill structure were described in enough detail to allow me to call this bird a Thayer's.

NA. The distance is not given, which is critical for knowing how well the eye could be seen. We do not know whether the bird was seen flying, which is critical for examination of the wing

tip. I now agree with the NA voter.

A-D. Bill size mentioned as smaller than Herring. Grant could have been describing a European subspecies of Herring as having dark eyes and pale wing-tips. As far as I can recall I do not remember hearing or seeing any Herrings with this color combination of dark eyes and pale wingtips in Iowa or midwest. Perhaps more research is needed but I think Thayer's is adequately described here.

A-D. NA and other ADs raise some valid questions. I will vote A-D if viewing distance reasonable. Gray primaries and dark eye together would strongly indicate Thayer's. Agree that only one alone could be considered inconclusive.

SENT TO: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 82803.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-07

What species? Thayer's Gull - adult How many? 1

Location? doustream tip of enchanted Island, Davenport, IA

Type of Habitat? Mississippi River - edge of open water, Iowa side

When? date(s): Jan 2, 1989 time: 1:35 to 1:50 PM

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport, IA 52801

Others with you: Brian Corey Blevins

Others before or after you: _____

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.

Herring-sized gull, much like nearby Herring Gulls. Bill yellow, eyes dark, head white with tan streaks, neck same, back & mantle light gray, wing tips medium grey with white windows, tail white, white below, legs & feet pink. Bill not as large as nearby Herring.

Similar species: how eliminated: Herring Gull - eye light, wing tips black with white windows, bill larger than Thayers.
California Gull - eye light, wing tips black with white windows, yellow legs.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Cloudy, thin cloud cover, sun at 90° angle.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen many in arctic & 6-8 previous, in arid west

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 2 hrs this form completed? 2 hrs.

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