

Great Black-backed Gull
10 Dec 1988
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Engebretsen
IBL 59:52, 77

Record Number: 88-42
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Bery Engebretsen

REFERENCES

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

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

A-D. Apparently a 2nd winter bird. Good description.

NA. This is a bit brief for an accidental (but apparently increasing) species. How much larger than Herring Gull was this one?

NA. Except for size, which varies among Herring Gulls, this description fits a second year Herring Gull. The light bill base light bill base also points to Herring Gull.

A-D. Good description of imm. Great Black-backed, probably 2nd-winter bird based on pale base to bill. The large size compared to Herring Gulls, dark bar on secondaries, and darker mantle all support identification.

A-D. Bill suggests 2nd winter, but other features are those of first-winter bird. Would help to have more definite size comparison.

A-D. Would be nice to get a documentation from Armstrong occasionally.

A-D. Size and shape of bill not described but all other marks that identify this as a Great Black-backed Gull are present in the documentation. Adequately described for me to give this one an acceptance vote.

REVOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D. Combination of white head, back coloration, and light rump with secondary bar on wing appears to be conclusive. A much more precise quantification of the size comparison would make this much easier. Isn't it possible to say something like "Herring Gulls nearby were approximately 3/4 as large and bill was perhaps twice as heavy compared to Herring"? This is infinitely more helpful than to say simply "larger" than Herrings. Tell us how much larger it is so a judgement can be made whether it is within the possible range of a Herring.

A-D. Good description of 2nd-year Gr. Black-backed Gull. Both Herring and Gr. Black-backed should have light color at the base of the bill. The description is adequate for a species that may soon be regular in Iowa.

A-D. Observer could have quantified size better. I think bird was too dark and contrasty for 2nd-year Herring.

A-D. Details were brief but described a bird coming into its 2nd winter pretty well. I will admit that size comparison to Herring was not best but other criteria were adequate to eliminate Herring.

A-D. To me the key is saddleback effect--light head, dark

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 08/04/93
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back, pale rump and tail. Clearly to me 2nd-year for B.B. Gull.
2nd yr Herring Gull does not show this effect, despite comment on
2nd NA.

SENT TO: Bery Engebretsen, 6492 James Francis, Johnston, IA
50131.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

- 1. Species Greater black-backed gull 2. Number: one
- 3. Location Saylorville
- 4. Date: 12/10 5. Time Bird seen: (about) 11⁰⁰ to 11¹⁵
- 6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): In company of half dozen Herring Gulls (adult & immature), one ~~big~~ Ring-bill, larger than Herring Gulls, Dark back, white head & some speckling. Back was not black, but mottled gray or dark brown. Bill was dark tipped & lighter base. In flight, there was one dark line across secondary, and primaries were dark. Rump was very light, contrasting with mantle. There was a fairly large dark tail band, a first or possibly second winter bird.
- 7. Description of voice, if heard: —
- 8. Description of behavior: on ice, flying
- 9. Habitat - general: Big end of Saylorville
specific: off Sandpaper Beach, half ice, half open
- 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: Larger than Herring gull would seem to eliminate Lesser BB, also, only one dark secondary band on wing, white head & large size unlike immature Herring Gull.
- 11. Distance (how measured)? 200 yds - estimate 12. Optical equipment: 35x
- 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): partly cloudy sun to left, bird to west
- 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: on east coast
- 15. Other observers: Gene Armstrong
- 16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
- 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: ?
- 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: N.A. Geo.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Benny Engelbrecht Address: 6492 James Francis
Signature

Date: 12/10/85 City, State: Johnston, IA 50131