

Black-legged Kittiwake

6 Dec 1981

Lock and Dam 11, Dubuque Co., IA

*Moore, *Myers, *Kent

also 7 Dec; Myers 1982, IBL 52:25, 27, 42

Record Number: 81-20
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Francis L. Moore, 6 Dec

Robert K. Myers, 6 Dec

Thomas H. Kent, 7 Dec

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 52:25, 27

Myers, B. 1982. Black-legged Kittiwake at Dubuque. IBL 52:33.

Records Committee: 52:42

VOTE: 4 II, 3 III

II, Good descriptions and drawings.

II, good doc.

II, very solid.

1. Size and shape — The bird was crow size or slightly smaller. The head was large and rounded as in other owls but the body seemed more tapered and the tail was long.

2. Color, feather patterns, etc. — The owl had light gray facial discs that were framed in black. The bird had a dark upper breast or throat band with a wider white band just below it. From the white band on down, the breast and belly were light gray covered with fine dark horizontal bars. The back and wings were brown-gray with white spots. The tail was barred. The eyes were yellow and the hooked beak was very pale yellow.

3. Behavior — In flight the Hawk Owl was swift and direct, like an accipiter, with rapid wing beats. It would usually swoop up and land in the very highest part of a tree very much like a shrike. The bird would occasionally jerk its tail up and down in Kestrel fashion. The owl was quite tame and would perch at the tip top of a tree and it usually sat at a slight angle to the branch it was on not perpendicular to it as with most owls.

The bird represents the first Iowa record of the Hawk Owl to be supported by photographs and documentation. The only other Iowa records are unreliable and not supported by data. E. James, 1823, in *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819, 1820* list the bird among others from this area but has no details. Anderson, 1907, included the Hawk Owl in his book *Birds of Iowa* on the basis of two reports from George H. Berry that he had taken a Hawk Owl in Iowa and observed another in December 1903 near Cedar Rapids, Linn County. No specimen or any other details can be found.

This Hawk Owl was very cooperative always being in the same area so many, and I mean many, birders could find it. I am sure the newly-founded Iowa Birdline was very helpful in spreading word of the sighting. I received calls from birders from as far as Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Kansas City who heard about the bird on the Iowa Birdline and were coming to Iowa to see it.

Literature Cited

Anderson, R.M. 1907. *The Birds of Iowa*. Proc. Davenport Academy of Sciences, p. 267.

James, E. 1823. *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819, 1820* London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown. p. 371.

GENERAL NOTES



Black-legged Kittiwake at Saylorville Reservoir — While birding the grassy north shore of the Saylorville Dam around 11:00 a.m. on 12 December 1981, I noticed a very different gull flying nearby over the lake.

My first impression was that it was a Sabine's Gull as the wing pattern consisted of dark primaries and a light triangular patch on the trailing half of the wing. The gull seemed trimmer — slimmer and smaller — than the hundreds of Ring-billed Gulls on the lake and larger than the Bonaparte's which were still on the lake. As the gull flew by a moment later, I got a good look at it and quickly began taking notes.

Its bill was slimmer than a Ring-billed's and all black. The underparts were white. The head was white with a small oval spot just below and behind the eyes. It had a bar on its nape. The back from the nape bar to the rump was gray. The wings were gray, lighter on the trailing edge, with a bar extending from the middle of the base to the wrist, which contrasted with the overall color of the wing. The primaries were dark, nearly black. The tail was white, notched, and had a terminal band.

Consulting Robbin's field guide I found that it was not a Sabine's Gull, but a Black-legged Kittiwake in immature plumage.

I contacted Dick Mooney in Des Moines who later joined me along with his wife and Margaret Brooke to observe the bird. We watched the bird for about 45 minutes after which time I birded other parts of the lake. At 3:30 p.m. I returned to the dam to view the bird one last time swimming not more than 100 feet from shore. Other birders were contacted and could not find the bird the next day. JOE SCHAUFENBUEL, St. Lucas.

Black-legged Kittiwake at Dubuque — On 6 Dec, 1981 Russell Hays, Francis Moore, and I were observing a mixed group of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls at Lock and Dam 11 at Dubuque, Iowa, when Russell picked out an odd looking gull. Francis quickly located the bird in his field guide and confirmed that we were indeed looking at an immature Black-legged Kittiwake. The bird was judged to be about the same size as a Ring-billed Gull as we watched it feed with the other gulls. The dark spot behind the eye and the black bar on the nape of the neck were easily noted on the basically white gull. The black wing tips with no white spots and the black slashes running diagonally from the bend in the wings to the back were very distinctive. We also observed the slightly forked tail with a black terminal band. Tom Kent from Iowa City relocated the bird the next day. This sighting represents the fourth Iowa record of the Black-legged Kittiwake to be supported by positive documentation from more than one observer. There are also two other records.

The Kittiwake was viewed in excellent light at distances of 100' to 300' with 7x35 binoculars and a 20x scope. BOB MYERS, 1236 Sylvania Ave., Waterloo, Iowa.

Final Report of the "One Day Eagle Counts" — For the past three years the National Wildlife Federation's Raptor Information Center has conducted an annual January National Eagle Count. I still coordinate the Mississippi River count.

With the Raptor Information Center having State coordinators who publish their results, it is no longer necessary for me to publish mine. Each year my accounts have appeared in the *Illinois Audubon Bulletin* and *Iowa Bird Life*. Other articles on eagles might be written for these journals. The reports summary that follows will show the results of four periods of five years each.

year	adults	immatures	not aged	total	percentage of immatures
1977	622	274	30	926	30
1978	977	416	53	1446	30
1979	1077	300	30	1407	22
1980	992	422	5	1419	30
1981	1094	382	35	1511	26
Total	4762	1794	153	6709	27.2

In the above figures which includes all of Illinois, the Mississippi River along Illinois border and along Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as inland in Kentucky. These are the areas I used in my counts. Areas covered each year are fairly consistent. It is not possible to have the exact coverage each year. My counts were mostly designed to show immature total population ratios.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

81-20

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Black-legged Kittiwake

DATE SEEN: 6, 7 Dec 1981

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Dubuque

OBSERVERS: Bob Myers, Francis Moore, T. Kent

DATE OF REVIEW: 1982

METHOD OF REVIEW: mail

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: II

COMMENTS:

Well documented, solid.

mailed 5/21/82

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.

What species? Black-legged Kittiwake (immature) How many? 1

Location? lock + Dam No. 11 at Dubuque, Iowa (Dubuque County)

Type of habitat? Turbulent water area in front of dam

When? date(s): Dec 6, 1981 time: ^{about} 1:10 P.M. to 1:15 P.M.

Who? your name and address: Robert K. Myers, 1236 Sylvia Ave. Waterloo, Iowa 50701

others with you: Francis Moore, Russell Hays

others before or after you: — Tom Kent on Dec 7, 1981

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.

The gull was approximately the same size as ~~the~~ a ring-billed gull of which there were many in the area. If anything bird may have been slightly smaller than ring-bill and had somewhat narrower wings. The eye was dark and had a larger dark spot just behind it (cheek spot). Bird had a very prominent dark bar on nape of neck. Not just a thin line but a fairly wide bar. Wing pattern (dorsal) was quite unique. Outer primaries were black and formed black triangles from bend of wing out. A black slash was also very apparent starting at bend of wing and running diagonally back to a point in the bird's back just above the rump.



dorsal view

The tail had a definite shallow fork or 'U' notch with a black terminal band following this 'U'. The rest of dorsal surface ^{of wings + back} was grayish and bottom surface appeared white. Head was white as was rump and tail except for terminal band. I did not notice color of feet or bill.

Bird was flying and apparently feeding with other gulls in front of lock + dam and finally flew up over dam and upstream out of our view.

Similar species and how eliminated: Only problems I could see would be with immature Bonaparte's, Sabine's, Black-headed, Little, or Ross' gulls. None of these has the 'nape bar' and only the Sabine's has forked tail but dorsal pattern of it is not right and it doesn't have 'nape bar' or cheek spot.

None have right combination except Kittiwake.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Excellent - bird was in sunlight - sun was behind + to right of us -

bird at closest (when I saw it) was about 100' (by eye) - I used B&H 785 roof prisms

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No experience with Kittiwake but I am

familiar with the plumages of the Bonaparte's gull

References and persons consulted before writing description: I checked Peterson's book (new one)

and Robbins' Birds of North America

How long before field notes made? 10 min. this form completed? 7 hr.

What species? Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa Tridactyla*) How many? 1Location? Lock and Dam No. 11; N.E. part of Dubuque along Mississippi RiverType of habitat? Mostly flying below Lock and Dam No. 11 on the Mississippi R.When? date(s): December 6, 1981 time: 1:05 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 264 Western Ave., Waterloo, IA 50701others with you: Bob Myers, Russell Haysothers before or after you: None before, Tom Kent next day

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. Russell Hays noticed a small gull flying with the rest of the gulls below the dam and said that one had a dark spot behind its eye. I figured that he had noticed a Bonaparte's Gull so I swung my scope over to check the bird out a little closer. What I saw was a small gull flying very tern-like (like a Bonaparte's would) and at first thought it was that species. As it flew closer to my location and I got a better view of the bird with full sunlight shining on it I noticed a patch of black going from its throat, over the nape, to the other side of the throat. This aroused my suspicion and I then took a closer look at the bird and I noticed that the bird had dark feet, a shallowly notched tail with a black border that followed the V-shape of the terminal portion of the tail. Also noticed was the white trailing edge to the wing (this would be black in the Bonaparte's) and the very dark wing tips with a band running diagonally from the "elbow" of the wing across the wing coverts to the lower part of the tertials. There was a dark smudge, fairly well defined, behind the eye. The rest of the head, neck, throat, belly and under-tail coverts were white. The upper surface of the tail was white except for the terminal band. Under-wing linings were light^{gray} colored except the tips which were a darker gray color. No voice was heard.

(see back)

Similar species and how eliminated: Bonaparte's does not have a dark stripe across the nape, its tail is not forked and it has a black trailing edge to the wing, not white as this bird did. Bonaparte's would have shown more white in the primaries also. Coloration was not the same as a Red-legged Kittiwake or Sabine's Gull.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Lighting was ideal, sun shining directly on bird from almost directly above (except for time of the year angle); viewing distance from 100 feet to 300 feet most of the time; viewed with 20x60 Bushnell Spacemaster telescope and 7x35mm B+L Roof Prism binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No previous experience with this species. I have had considerable experience with immature and winter plumage Bonaparte's Gull.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Birds of Canada, Godfrey; Audubon Society Encyclopedia of N.A. Birds, Terres; Field Guide to the Birds, East, R.T. Petersen; Birds of N.A., Robbins

How long before field notes made? None this form completed? 5 Hours

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

81-20

General Field marks observed:



What species? Black-legged Kittiwake How many? 1 imm.Location? Lock and Dam 11, Dubuque, Dubuque Co. IowaType of habitat? Mississippi R. damWhen? date(s): 7 Dec 1981 time: 7:45 to 7:55 AMWho? your name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240others with you: noneothers before or after you: Bob Myers, Francis Moore, Russell Hays (yesterday)

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.

"Black-legged Kittiwake immature, slightly smaller than Ring-billed Gulls it was with. Feeding below dam in main channel. Upper wing with black distally on leading edge, gray proximally with black line running diagonally from the elbow to the trailing edge near the body. White triangle formed by gray area (with black edge) and black leading edge. Under wing white. Black line from side over neck to opposite side -- continuous. Tail slightly forked with narrow black tip. Flight somewhat faster than Ring-bills. Bill and leg color not observed. Not heard. In flight the whole time." "White head and body"



Similar species and how eliminated:

Imm. Bonaparte's Gull -- neck mark most definite difference. Also trailing edge of wing not dark distally and no white in gray area or at leading edge. Forked tail and size difference more subjective.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Early morning bright overcast with sun to right and slightly behind. About 200 yds (guess). 8 x 40 binoculars, 20 x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen many in Alaska and many Bonaparte's in Iowa.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson drawing looked at 2½ hours prior to sighting.

How long before field notes made? 5 min this form completed? 9 hrs

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240