

Sabine's Gull Record Number: 93-27  
23 Oct 1993 Classification: A-D  
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA  
\*Mark Proescholdt  
from 21 Oct; IBL 64:13, 64:68, Proescholdt 1994

DOCUMENTATION

Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb 50148 (2/23/94)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:13

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

Proescholdt, M. 1994. Juvenile Sabine's Gull at Red Rock Reservoir. Iowa Bird Life 64:54.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Combination of brown back and sides, and wing pattern convincing.

A-D, Immature. Only North American Gull with this wing pattern and brown back.

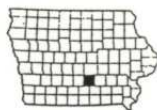
A-D, An unmistakable bird with any kind of view at all!

A-D, Brown color and wing pattern indicate juvenile, but tail band was not seen.

## JUVENILE SABINE'S GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

MARK PROESCHOLDT

Tim Schantz first found this bird on 21 October 1993 on the south side of Red Rock and east of the Whitebreast Area. He called the birdline and spread the word. On the morning of 23 October 1993, my mother Beth and I located the gull near where it had been seen for the previous two days.



This small gull was by itself about 150 yards offshore when we first saw it. It was a sunny day, and the gull's brownish back and sides with the brownish color extending up to the back of the head were easy to see. A Herring Gull started diving at it, and the Sabine's Gull flew away. In flight, the Sabine's Gull's striking pattern of dark-white-dark triangles on its upper wings stood out from even a very long distance as it flew north across the lake. It was much smaller than the gull chasing it. We did not notice the tail and its pattern and colors. We watched the gull for quite a while and then lost sight of it.

Ann Johnson drove into the area then. After searching for several minutes, we found the gull flying toward us fairly low over the water. All three of us followed its flight with our scopes for quite a while and had good looks at its striking wing pattern. Then the gull flew a long ways away toward the dam and then to the north side where we lost sight of it. The bird was not seen again as far as I know.

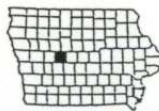
This was the eleventh sighting of a Sabine's Gull in Iowa and the first sighting of a Sabine's Gull for Red Rock Reservoir. Four sightings of Sabine's Gull were before 1982, and six other sightings were from 1983 to 1991. The most recent sighting of Sabine's Gull was of an adult and a juvenile together near Davenport and Bettendorf on 13-14 October 1991 (Pinkston, *Iowa Bird Life* 62:114-116, 1992).

Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

## LATE BREEDING VIRGINIA RAIL AT SNAKE CREEK MARSH

JIM SINCLAIR

On 29 August 1993 at approximately 1 p.m. Gene and Eloise Armstrong and I stopped beside a small opening in the vegetation at Snake Creek Marsh in Greene County. Immediately an adult Virginia Rail strolled into the opening and began to calmly pick at the surface of the water. As we were congratulating ourselves on this sight, a small, all-black rail appeared in the opening. Before our astonished eyes, both birds then disappeared into the denser vegetation.



Considering the late date, the small size (approximately one third the size of the Virginia Rail), and the all-black coloring of the second rail, we were, to a person, convinced we had just seen a Black Rail in Iowa. We had just begun to discuss the field marks of the 'Black Rail', which included scant white speckling on the upper back, when the Virginia Rail reappeared, followed quickly by the black rail. As we watched, the Virginia Rail captured a large worm, approached the smaller rail with its prize, and then fed the worm to the 'black rail'. Once again both birds vanished into

the dense vegetation leaving three birders not only amazed but also aghast at what would surely have been a misidentification of a Black Rail in Iowa.

The Virginia Rail is an uncommon summer resident in Iowa with several nest records including one in Greene County. Although information on the breeding habits of rails is extremely difficult to gather, Virginia Rails are thought to produce two broods a year, one in June and one in July. The downy young are black and begin to molt into juvenal plumage within a week of hatching, possibly explaining the faint speckling on our bird's back. In any case, a downy young on 29 August would make this brood at least a month late and certainly caused both excitement and despair.

The Virginia Rail is an uncommon summer resident in Iowa but it has been reported nesting in Greene County. Previous studies in Iowa indicate that they usually begin nesting late May or June (Tanner, W. D., and G. O. Hendrickson, *Iowa Bird Life* 24:65-70, 1954; Kaufmann, G. W. *Canad. Field-Nat.* 103:270-282, 1989). Although they might produce two broods in a summer, it is more likely that this young bird was from a very late nest, perhaps delayed because of the flooding in 1993. The downy young are black and begin to molt into juvenal plumage within a week of hatching, possibly explaining the faint speckling on our bird's back. Whatever the cause, a downy young on 29 August represents a very late nest and certainly caused both excitement and despair.

810 North B. Street, Indianola, IA 50125

## I.O.U. BUSINESS

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Booneville, Saturday, 14 November 1993  
HILDA A. SICKELS, SECRETARY

Present: Ann Barker (presiding), Jim Fuller, Hilda Sickels, Pam Allen, Eloise Armstrong, Rick Hollis, Ann Johnson, Matt Kenne, and Bud Gode.  
The meeting was held at the home of Eugene and Eloise Armstrong. The board is grateful to the Armstrongs for their hospitality. The minutes for the 3 April 1993 board meeting were approved as published (motion by Allen, seconded by Armstrong). Treasurer Allen advised the board that dues notices will be mailed next week.

#### Committee Reports

Records Barker reported for Tom Kent that review and archival of old records is proceeding well. Completion of the review is expected in 1994. The committee's budget request is \$200 for current records and \$200 for review and archival of old records, the same amounts that were budgeted for the committee in 1993. The committee nominated Ross Silcock for a six-year term ending in 2000. It was moved (Hollis, seconded by Gode) that the nomination be approved. Motion carried.  
Membership: Jim Sinclair's second term has expired, as has Ann Johnson's first. Both positions need to be filled. The committee has not met, and no budget request was received; the proposal is to keep the budget amount the same as for 1993. Information was again sent to feeder survey participants who requested it.

Publications: The committee met in September. Pete Petersen's term expired, and the committee selected John Fleckenstein as its chair. Harold White was nominated for a five-year term ending in 1998. It was moved (Allen, seconded by Fuller) that the nomination be approved. Motion carried. Budget

What species? Sabine's Gull - Juvenile How many? 1Location? Red Rock Reservoir - (Marion Co.)Type of habitat? Large lake - near Whitebreast Area on south sideWhen? date(s): Oct. 23, 1993 time: 9:45 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. app.  
10:15 a.m. to 10:18 a.m. app.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdt, Ann Johnsonothers before or after you: Tim Schantz, Armstrongs, Pam and Reid Allen

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.

Tim Schantz had found this bird on Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>. Mom and I located this bird all by itself out in the water. It had brownish back and sides and the brownish came up to the back of the head. It was a small gull. A Herring Gull started diving at it and we watched it as it flew away. It was very noticeable as it went way north across the lake. Its striking wing pattern of dark-white-dark triangles on both wings stood out from even a very long distance away. It was much smaller than the gull chasing it. We did not see the tail and its pattern and colors. We watched it for quite a while then lost it.

Ann Johnson pulled ~~in~~ in then. After a while of scoping we found the gull flying toward us fairly low over the water. We had good looks at its striking wing pattern for a long time. Then the gull flew a long ways away toward the dam and then to the north side. We followed for quite a while and easily followed its wing pattern. Then it was gone.

Similar species and how eliminated:

A Black-legged Kittiwake 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird is vaguely similar, but it does not have the three-triangle look on its wing and does not have a brownish back and neck

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Sunny, sun behind us and at our side; 150 yards when first seen and watched probably over a mile away in flight at least; 22x Scope, 8x30

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

1<sup>st</sup> Juvenile Sabine's Gull, have seen a couple of others; Have seen quite a few BI-L. Kittiwake

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? Oct. 24, 1993 this form completed? Oct. 27, 1993