

Lesser Black-backed Gull
19 Aug 1989
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
Cecil
IBL 60:11, 15, 61:85

Record Number: 89-47
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Robert Cecil

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:11, 15

Records Committee: IBL 61:85

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 abstain

A-D: A hard way to find unusual gulls.

A-D: Description of size, mantle color, leg color and wingtip patterns are convincing. An amazing record for August. Is nesting next?

A-D: Yellow legs with slate-grey mantle along with time of observation are convincing.

A-D: Very adequate description for this species.

A-D: Good details and a very interesting documentation.

A-D: Description convincing. Is the date unusual for an adult-plumaged bird? Presumably a non-breeding adult.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-47

What species? Lesser Black-backed Gull

How many? 1

Location? Sandpiper Beach, Sailorville Reservoir, Polk County, Iowa

Type of Habitat? Sandy beach

When? date(s): Aug. 19, 1989

time: 9:00 AM to 9:20 AM

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil 1315 41st St. Des Moines, IA 50311

Others with you: None

Others before or after you: Englebretson found it independently and at about the same time

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.

I was checking through the gulls (all Ringbills) at Sandpiper when I came across a yellow bill with conspicuous red gonys. Attached was a slightly larger gull with a slate gray mantle. I began making field notes.

--Head: Snow white and unstreaked. Bill yellow with red gonys spot.

--Size: Overall, perhaps 2 to 3 inches longer than accompanying Ring-bills while at rest. Overall, the body was bulkier than Ring-bills, but could not quantify.

--Mantle: Slate gray - much darker than accompanying Ring-bills. Wings darkened to black at wingtips. The area of black at the wingtips seemed to approximate the black area at wingtips of adult Ring-bills.

--Other wingtip info. (upper surface): Based upon bill color and presence of red gonys, I felt this was an adult gull and tried to check for mirrors on the wingtips. Basically, the wingtips appeared uniformly black. I saw the bird fly or extend its wings a couple of times, but was not convinced I saw other than un-mirrored black tips. On one occasion, I thought I could make out a faint, undeveloped mirror on the first primary of one wing, but was not entirely certain. If it was there, it was certainly indistinct. Wing had a relatively narrow white trailing edge. Forgot to check for thin white leading edge.

(Cont. next sheet)

Similar species; how eliminated: No other species has combination of slate gray mantle and yellow legs other than Yellow-footed, which is not a known vagrant. According to NGS, Yellow-footed is same size as Glaucous. This bird was much smaller - not a whole lot bigger than a Ring-bill.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? Not me.
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Distance perhaps 100 yds. (guess). Sky generally clear. 20x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Seen on adult at Keokuk Oct. 20 - 22, 1986 at Keokuk. That's it.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS to check for similar species.

How long before field notes made? at time this form completed? 48 hours.

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

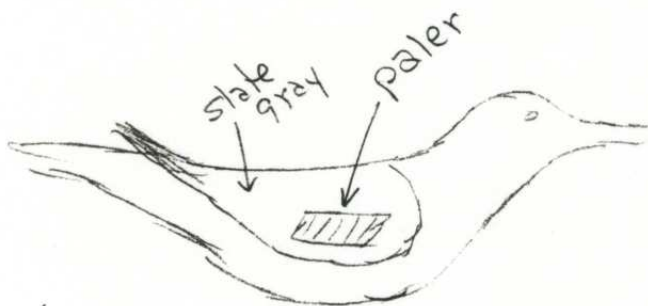
--Wings (undersurface): Having had experience with the adult at Keokuk, I carefully checked the underwings. The underwing was dusky, much darker than accompanying Ring-bills which have, in adults, pale gray or whitish underwings. As with the Keokuk bird, this bird showed much darker gray on the distal 1/3 of the underwing.

--Other wing info.: The bird showed a paler, roughly rectangular patch (when at rest) in what I assumed were the secondaries. I'm an awful artist, but see sketch.

--Tail: snow white and unmarked.

--Underparts: Uniform white.

--Eye color: Not noted.



Lesser Black-backed Gull

Aug. 19, 1989 Sailorville Reservoir.

Additional Comment

I reviewed my documentation of the Lesser Black-backed Gull and realized I had failed to specifically note leg color of the Gull. I had noted this in my field notes made at the time, but simply failed to include in the documentation except under Similar Species.

According to my notes (here in front of me), the gull had yellow legs and feet. They were not bright yellow, but they were definitely not pink or any other color

From recollection, I had a difficult time determining leg color initially as the gull was either squatting or in the water. In flight, however, I saw the bird bank, clearly exposing its legs, where the color was noted. Again, I noticed that the legs were not bright yellow, but yellow they were.

Bob

Bob Cecil

Dec. 13, 1989