

Thayer's Gull
31 Dec 1988
Montrose, Lee Co., IA
*S. Dinsmore
IBL 59:42, 77

Record Number: 88-40
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:42

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 5 A-D, 1 NA, 1 abstain

A-D. Good description of imm. Thayer's Gull. All key characteristics noted, although primary detail (upperwing) could have been better. Description of plumage as "pale, frosty, brown" is accurate for Thayer's.

A-D. While there is certainly a great deal of variation among gulls, this description sounds much more like a "classic" Thayer's than #88-37 by same observer.

A-D. Viewed at reasonable yardage and in detail, this fits the first-winter Thayer's Gull description my reference material describes.

NA. I am not sure from the description whether this is a Thayer's, Iceland or hybrid. It would help to have a better idea of what frosty brown means. "Pale frosty brown" sounds very light; "lighter than a juvenile Herring" sounds much darker. If the bird is indeed pale and does not show dark wing tips when standing and does not have dark wing tips in flight, it should be an Iceland Gull. The faint, muted dark tail band leaves me wondering.

A-D. This documentation gives a very good description of a first winter Thayer's Gull. All marks mentioned taken together eliminate other species.

REVOTE: 5 A-D, 1 NA, 1 abstain

A-D. Completely frosty-brown bird without darker wingtips when at rest does suggest Iceland Gull. Dark bill, at first, suggested Thayer's but Grant says that bill of 1st winter Iceland can appear all dark at a distance. On balance however, the presence of a muted tail band is in favor of Thayer's and this is probably an exceptionally light example of this species.

NA or A-D. Count my vote A-D if there is only one other NA. Since I was the only one to raise questions, I will essentially abstain from the second round unless I convinced two others to vote NA.

A-D. My thoughts were that the coloration of the wingtips were a lighter brown and not dark as Herring used in comparison. I think of an Iceland immature as tan and not frosty-brown. Iceland should show lighter wingtips than rest of wing and back.

NA. NA raises valid points--tail band is described as "faint, muted," and upperwing is evenly colored, with no suggestion of classic dark-light-dark Thayer's primary pattern. These points indeed tend to favor Iceland. I would like to hear observer's comments on this possibility--doc did not discuss Iceland.

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union
Thayer's Gull

Printed: 08/04/93
31 Dec 1988 RC No. 88-40 (cont)

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-40

What species? Thayer's Gull How many? 1st-year

Location? Pool 19 of Mississippi R., near Montrose, Lee Co., IA

Type of Habitat? resting on ice and flying over river with other gulls

When? date(s): 31 Dec 1988 time: 10:15 a.m. - to 10:25 a.m.

Who? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

Others with you: Bart Ballard, Fairfax IA

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.

First noticed this pale "frosty" brown gull resting on ice with about two thousand Ring-billed and Herring gulls. Bird was 25% smaller than a juvenile Herring Gull nearby, but was larger than Ring-billed Gulls. Entire body, including head, mantle, wings, and underparts, were pale frosty brown, lighter than a juvenile Herring Gull when resting, wingtips were not darker than rest of wing. Legs looked dark. Bill dark, fairly short, no pronounced gonys. Head noticeably rounded, not flat like Herring Gull. In flight, flight feathers were all silvery from below. Wing was same color from above, without darker wingtips or a light "window" on the inner primaries. Tail was same color as rest of upperparts, except for a faint, muted dark tail band.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Wing pattern, tail pattern, rounder head, and even color of body eliminates similar Herring Gull.

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

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

Viewing conditions excellent with sun mostly behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 150 yards. Optical equipment used: Burchinell 20-45x spotting scope and Bausch + Lomb 8x40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I have seen numerous first-year Thayer's Gulls in Iowa. Am also familiar with juvenile Herring Gull.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None

How long before field notes made? during observation this form completed? 1 day

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