

Thayer's Gull
30 Nov 1988
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*S. Dinsmore
IBL 59:14, 77

Record Number: 88-28
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:14

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

VOTE: 4-A-D, 2-NA, 1-abstain

A-D. I have reservations about the head color being the same as the body, since all pictures I have seen show lighter head even in the darker individuals. I also think it would be extremely difficult to call a bill size at 400+ yds. All the above aside the under and upper wing pattern clearly make this a dark first winter Thayer's Gull.

NA. To me, descriptions of Thayer's Gulls are quite subjective. This description could fit either Herring or Thayer's Gull. I wouldn't describe any of the Thayer's Gulls I have seen as dark brown or with anything but outer primaries as darker.

NA. I do not see dark brown color as describing a first winter Thayer's Gull. Silvery wing lining should be throughout underwing not just in primaries. My concept of dark and light brown in relation to Thayer's and Herring Gulls must be quite a bit different than the observer.

A-D. See comments previous record.

REVOTE: 2-A-D, 4-NA, 1-abstain

NA. If there is doubt on this one, lets let it go.

NA. I agree that Thayer's ID is quite subjective. I would like some photographic evidence of the darker birds before they are labeled as Thayer's.

NA. Disagree with reviewer who says Thayer's should have a lighter head--Herrings have a lighter head. I'll stand by my original comments and err on the conservative side without prejudice. Agree that head and bill hard to evaluate at 400 yards (or 50 yards). I'm wary of dark primaries (upper surface, not just tip) and darker tail.

NA. I stay with my prior vote of not accepting this record and concur with the other negative vote on this record that the description could fit either Herring or Thayer's Gull. Distance involved makes some criteria described as unuseful and use of dark brown as a descriptive coloration for this species does not fit a Thayer's Gull. Light or medium brown would be a better description for the color of this species in my opinion.

A-D. See my original comment re ID of Thayer's Gulls in Iowa. I don't have a serious objection to the description of this bird (88-28).

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Thayer's Gull

How Many?1 1st-winter bird

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-north of Jester Park

Habitat?feeding in river channel with thousands of other gulls

Date?30 Nov 1988

Time?1:38-2:55 p.m.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:none

Description of bird:I was looking over the gulls that were feeding north of Jester Park when I noticed a dark gull with very white underwings. The bird would alternately feed in the river channel and rest on the ice along the edge of the channel. I watched the bird on and off for over an hour and took the following notes.

The bird was roughly the size of a Herring Gull. The bird was dark brown colored, including the body, head, tail, and wings. The wings, seen in flight, were dark brown above with darker primaries. The wings were the same color as the back, except for the darker primaries. There was no lighter "window" on the inner primaries. The underwing pattern was as follows; the flight feathers were silvery white, with dusky tips to the outermost primaries, and the rest of the underwing was light brown. The tail was dark, darker than the mantle. The bill was black and seemed to be shorter than the bills of the Herring Gulls it was with. The legs were pale, similar in color to the legs of a Herring Gull. I could not see the eye color. I concluded that the bird was a 1st-winter Thayer's Gull.

Similar species and how eliminated:The bill and leg color and size eliminates all gulls except Herring, Thayer's, and Iceland gulls. The uniform dark color of the wings, lack of a lighter "window" on the inner primaries, and the silvery color of the underside of the flight feathers eliminates 1st-winter Herring and Iceland gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were good with the sun behind me. Estimated viewing distance was 400 yards. I used a Buschnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Thayer's Gulls in Iowa, and I am familiar with both Herring and Iceland gulls.

References consulted:NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?made while watching bird

How long before this form was completed?5 hours