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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKERissa tridactylaLocation: Jumbo Lake (Julesberg Reservoir); west of Julesberg; Sedgwick County, ColoradoDate: November 26, 1994Setting:

I was birding with Bill and John Prather at Jumbo Reservoir on a cold, foggy morning. The fog lifted late in the morning and we were at the southeast corner of the lake looking out over the water at thousands of waterfowl. We first saw the kittiwake when it flew parallel to the shore about 50 yards out. We watched it intermittently with binoculars and scopes (Kowa TSN4 20-60X) for about 1 1/2 hours. It set up a pattern of flying south along the shore, past some trees, out over the lake and finally to return to start its "route" again. Once we saw it land on the water, but almost all of the observations were of the flying bird. The bird usually was 50-500 yards distant and out from the shore. Heights over the water were about 30-70 feet. The sky was clear and sunny for most of the period.

Description:

This was a first year bird. It was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull. It flew with a more rapid wingbeat than the couple of Ring-billed Gulls that were present. It had a white body and grey mantle. The grey was a little darker than the mantle of the Ring-billed Gull. The inner half of the upper wing, except for the secondaries, was grey and marked by a diagonal blackish-brown line. The secondaries and inner primaries were white. The outer primaries were black. This gave the upper surface of the bird a striking "M" pattern. There was a black half collar across the nape and a black spot behind the eye. The tail looked short, notched, and white with a black terminal band. The bill and legs were black.

Similar Species:

The "M" pattern on the upperwing rules out most other gulls. The Bonaparte's and Black-headed gulls have a dark, not white, trailing edge to the wing and lack the notched tail and black hind collar. Little Gull is much smaller and lacks the notched tail and black hind collar. Red-legged Kittiwake lacks the "M" pattern formed by the dark secondary coverts and does not have a black tail band. Sabine's Gull has a plain brownish-grey inner wing and lacks the black hind collar.

Experience with Species:

I have seen quite a few kittiwakes on pelagic trips off of both coasts. I most recently saw a juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake on November 22, 1990 at Jumbo Lake, Colorado.

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.



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