

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPT 7-0

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKERissa tridactylaLocation: Nee Noshe Reservoir; about 10 miles S.E. of Eads; Kiowa, County, ColoradoDate: November 25, 1995

I was birding with Brandon Percival. We stopped at the southwest boat ramp to Nee Noshe Reservoir approximately 3:00 p.m. We almost immediately saw an immature Black-legged Kittiwake. It was circling and flying around right off of the boat ramp. Within minutes we spotted the second kittiwake and watched both at the same time. For about 30 minutes we watched both birds off and on. They circled and landed on the water just below the boat ramp twice. Most of the time they flew across the boat ramp or disappeared behind flooded trees to the east, only to return within a few minutes. I observed one bird on the water with my Kowa scope (20-60X) at about 75 yards. The rest of the time we watched the birds circle in the air at 50-250 yards. At the closest approach, one bird flew over the edge of the boat ramp, nearly over our heads, at about 50 feet height. The light and viewing conditions were very good.

Description:

These were both first year birds. They were smallish gulls, being just slightly smaller than Ring-billed Gulls. They were more buoyant and flew with a more rapid wingbeats than adjacent Ring-billed Gulls. Both birds were identical in plumage. They had white bodies and a medium-gray mantle (maybe a little darker than the mantle of Ring-billeds). The tail was short and notched – white with a black terminal band. The bill was rather small, slightly drooped and all black. The eye was black. The legs and feet were black. The upper surface of the spread wing showed black outer primaries, white inner primaries; a gray inner wing with a white trailing edge and a blackish diagonal bar across the coverts. This made a large blackish "M" across the upper surface of the bird. The underwing was white. There was a black smudge behind the eye and a black half collar across the nape visible floating and in flight.

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 first winter Black-legged Kittiwakes in Colorado on November 22, 1990 and on November 26, 1994 at Jumbo Res.

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

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