

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

Accepted 7-0

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKERissa tridactylaLocation: Pueblo Reservoir; Pueblo County; Pueblo, ColoradoDate: December 14, 1996

I was participating in a Denver Field Ornithologists field trip. Other observers present were Brandon Percival and Bob Dickson (and others). We observed this bird for about an hour during mid-morning with excellent light. It was at distances of 100-400 yards. It spent most of its time in flight, usually at heights above us (though we stood on a bluff). It landed below us on the water's surface several times, though briefly. All in all however, we had an excellent opportunity to observe this individual in all lights and aspects

Description:

This was a first year bird. It was a smallish gull -- slightly smaller than adjacent Ring-billed Gulls but larger than a Bonaparte's Gull. It had a light, quick buoyant flight with more rapid wingbeats than Ring-billed Gulls.

It was in first winter plumage. It had a white body and a medium-gray mantle (about the same general color as the mantle of Ring-billeds). The tail was short and notched -- white with a wide black terminal band. The bill was rather small, slightly drooped and completely black. The eye was black. The legs and feet were black as seen in flight.

The bird was striking in flight. The upper surface of the spread wing showed black outer primaries and white inner primaries. The inner wing was gray with a white trailing edge and a blackish diagonal bar across the coverts. The effect was of a large blackish "M" across the upper surface of the bird in flight. The underwing was white. There was a black smudge behind the eye and a black half collar across the nape visible when the bird was floating and in flight.

Similar Species:

The "M" pattern on the upperwing rules out most other gulls. 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-gray 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, on November 26, 1994 at Jumbo Res. and November 25, 1995 at Nee Noshe Res.

This report was prepared from memory.

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