

23-92-105  
A

Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus

One 2<sup>nd</sup>. Winter Immature

January 11, 1992 (12:15 to 12:35 PM)  
again February 8, 1992 at CF&I Lakes 4m. S. of  
Pueblo, Pueblo Co. Colo.

Pueblo Reservoir, South Shore Marina, 4 miles West of Pueblo, Pueblo Co.,  
Colorado

Observed from 60 to 300 Yards with binoculars and Questar Scope.

Light: Bright, partly cloudy sky, bird at right angle to sun, some back  
lighting, but not a problem. Sun at our backs when bird flew north.

Observers: Van Truan, Dave Silverman, Bob Dickson, Dick Schottler, Susan  
Blackshaw, Warren Finch, Bob Spence, Brandon Percival, et al.

Habitat: Man-made Lake, Reservoir type.

General description: During an AVAS field-trip at Pueblo Reservoir with guest  
from other areas, I observed a large dark backed gull flying east along the  
south edge of the lakeshore. I brought everyone's attention to the bird as it  
came closer. The bird then flew south to a cove to the west of the boat launch  
area of the South Shore Marina area. We drove to a point overlooking this  
cove and refound the bird swimming with several ring-billed gulls. This bird  
was distinctly larger than the ring-billed gulls (about 3 to 4 inches). We  
noted the very dark grayish mantle and back, which appeared the same color,  
the longish bill, long pointed black wing-tips that extended around 4 inches  
beyond the tail. We all observed the bird for approximately 20 minutes as it  
swam near the edge of the ice. At this point we all discussed what field  
marks to confirm the bird as a lesser black-backed. The bird flew directly to  
the west of us (up to 60 yards) as it traveled north back to the main portion  
of the reservoir. In flight we note the very dark upper wings to the black  
tips, white at the base of the tail blending down to a solid black tail about  
1/3 from the tail's base. The tail also had a very thin white line along the  
tips edge. The bird continued north to the reservoir and then flew west out-  
of-sight.

Specific details: Size: About 20 inches compared to ring-billed

Shape: Typical gull shaped.

Head: White, with some brown streaking on the back.

Bill: Typical gull shaped, appeared thin and long, upper mandible was a  
grayish-flesh colored from base out 1/3 and dark to the tip, lower mandible  
appeared grayish-flesh colored from the base to about 2/3 the way and was dark  
brown or slate forming a spot at the tip.

Eye: Appeared light, but not distinctively. (later seen by both Bob Dickson  
and Marc Janos - both observed the light colored eye in better light) 8 Feb.  
92 at CF&I Lakes (noted light colored eye)

Nape: White, with brown streakings to upper back

Back: Dark grayish, same color as the folded wings, lighter than wing tips. In  
flight appeared to be same color as the wing coverts and slightly darker than  
secondaries.

Lesser Black-backed Gull January 11, 1992 Pueblo Reservoir cont.

Rump: white, plain. Upper Tail Covert: white, plain extending over central part of the tail

Throat, Breast, Belly, Flanks, and Under-tail coverts: white, some grayish shading

Wings: Closed: Mantle - dark grayish, plain .

Wing tips - Black, extended well beyond the tail

Wings: upper side in flight - mantle - dark grayish, lighter than primary tips

Primaries - dark brown at secondaries to black at tips

Secondaries - dark brown, somewhat lighter at body

under side in flight - coverts - appeared to be dark-grayish brown

primaries - brown at secondaries to black at tips

Secondaries - brown

Tail: upper side - white down 1 inch from base on the outer two tail feathers, inner feathers mottled at base down to black, forming a 1 inch wide black band, with a thin white edge at the tip of tail.

lower side - not noted.

Legs: not seen at this time. Dickson and Janos later saw fleshy-gray colored legs. not pink! Observed 8 Feb. 92 at Cf&I Lakes (fleshy-gray color noted)

Experience with this and similar species: I observed a lesser black-backed in Florida in 1977 in this exact plumage. This was my first Colorado record of this species.

Western Gull - seen numerous times in Cal. Ore. Wash. & B.C. both sub-species in all plumages.

Greater B.-b. - seen in N.J., N.Y., Mass. north to N. Brunswick in all plumages.

Herring & ring-billed - everywhere in all plumages.

Thayer's, California & Mew - seen in all plumages in Ore., Cal, & Wash.

Slaty-backed - no experience.

#### Elimination of similar species:

Western, Herring, Slaty-backed, & Gr. Black-backed - all three too large for this bird.

Ring-billed, Mew, & "black headed" - all too small to be this species

Thayer's - Back lighter grayish, tail all dark in this plumage, eye dark, pink legs.

California - Back medium-gray in this age class, all dark tail, upper mandible pink, with dark tip, legs greenish, head with grayish-brown down to the back. and dark eye.

Conclusions: I have no doubts that this bird was a 2<sup>nd</sup>. winter lesser black-backed gull. This report was from notes taken after observing the bird.

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## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS RARE BIRD REPORT



SPECIES: Lesser Black-backed Gull  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: Larus fuscus (graellsii)  
NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: one SEX: - PLUMAGE: 2nd winter  
DATE(S) SEEN: January 11, 1992 TIME(S) SEEN: 2:45 - 3:30 p.m.  
LOCALITY: Pueblo Reservoir  
NEAREST TOWN/COUNTY: Pueblo, Colo. 1 Pueblo  
OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: B&L Elite 10x42 binocs. ; Kowa 20-60x scope  
PHOTOGRAPHED: YES NO ☒ PHOTO SENT WITH REPORT: YES NO ☐  
LIGHT CONDITIONS: Good sun, from the side & behind me.  
ESTIMATED DISTANCE FROM BIRD: 75 - 400 yds  
WHO FIRST OBSERVED BIRD? CFO fieldtrip (I think was found by Van Truman, in this zip)  
OTHER OBSERVERS: Bob Dickson, V. Truman, B. Percival, D. Nelson, D. Schottler and others  
REPORT WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING ☒, OR AFTER        OBSERVATIONS.

## HABITAT IN WHICH BIRD OBSERVED:

Small ice-rimmed bay in large reservoir.

## BIRD'S BEHAVIOR AND ACTIONS:

I first observed the bird perched on the edge of the ice. It flew out and landed in the water where it swam and fed on small fish in the bay. It fed by flapping and lurching forward, plunging its head under water. Occasionally harassed other gulls (R-b. & Calif.) and

## BIRD'S CALLS OR SONG:

~~was~~ came out on top on these confrontations. I was able to make direct side by side comparisons with these species at those times.  
Calls not heard.

Describe in great detail the bird(s) that you saw. Emphasize the essential field marks that you used to identify the bird(s). Include general size, shape, plumage and color pattern. Add information on the shape, size and color of bill, head, upper and undersides, back, rump, wings, tail, legs and feet and any other details that were helpful or essential to the identification.

Clearly larger than Ring-billed Gull. About the size of adjacent Calif. Gulls, but in comparison was thicker-necked, longer-winged, and had a hefty bill. The mantle was very dark, slaty gray, much darker than Calif. Gull but not black. In comparison to Calif. Gull, the mantle <sup>was</sup> not only much darker but had a brownish cast not apparent in Calif. Gull. The head and body were white, with the face, head, sides of neck & nape heavily streaked with brown (finer on head, larger streaks & smudges on lower neck). Sides of breast and flanks weakly streaked. Center of chin, throat, breast & chest clear white. Undertail coverts white. There was a vaguely darker, more defined auricular. A white upper rim to the eye stood against the darker face. The spread wing was overall blackish, with black primaries, primary coverts; secondary coverts brownish dark gray; secondaries blackish with ill-defined thin white trailing edge; then blending into dark slaty gray mantle. The upper tail was white, with a black subterminal band that was bordered white at the sides. The white rump & upper tail stood out in flight against the otherwise black upperparts. The head had a long flattened crown, with a sloping forehead drawn out at the bill. The bill was rather large & thick, but without a strong gonysdeal an. The bill was black with a pale pinkish or yellowish tone at the base, blending in the black distal half. The upper ridge of the tip, and the tip <sup>was</sup> yellow. Iris was clear yellow. The feet & legs were dull yellowish- or grayish-pink. In the floating bird, the black wingtips extended ~3" beyond the tail & crossed each other well before the tip, giving the bird an elongated look.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

The very dark mantle, white underparts & fairly large size rule out all other gulls except:

Slaty-backed Gull - inner primaries & inner wing pale in this plumage & head is nearly white overall is larger with bulkier bill.

Great Black-backed Gull - Mantle nearly black; huge bill & overall size; finely barred inner wing; ~~whiter~~ whiter head.

Western / Yellow-footed Gull - Larger with heavier bill; Wing coverts pale gray brown; shorter-winged.

Prior experience that you have with this and similar species:

I've seen several Yellow-f Gulls (~30) and many Western & Great Black-backed Gulls. The only Lesser Black-backed Gull I've seen was the winter adult at Hamilton Res. in 1988.

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