

ACCEPTED (70)

CFO-ORC-FILE# 1998-61

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

Results: _____

Species:

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Dates: 13 December 1998

Number of birds seen: 1

Sex: unknown

Plumage: 2nd basic

Locality: Lake Loveland

Elevation: ~5000 ft.

Nearest town: Loveland

County: Larimer

Time observed: 4:40 pm.

Duration of observation: approximately 20 minutes

Other observers with you: Nick Komar

Other observers who saw the bird independently: None known. A 2nd winter Lesser Black-backed Gull showed up at Douglas Lake, north of Fort Collins, in January, but I believe the complete tail band on that bird rules out the possibility that they were the same individual.

Light conditions: Early twilight, with clear skies. The sun was just setting to our backs.

Optical equipment: Leica Trinovid 10X42, Bushnell sentry 36X50 spotting scope.

Distance from bird: ~150 meters.

Describe the bird's behavior: The bird was initially seen flying. It landed long enough to capture some form of food, and then spent 5 minutes or more being chased from one landing spot to another. Herring, California, and Ring-billed Gulls all chased the bird. Often on landing, it would apparently dip its capture in the water without eating it. After finally eating the morsel, the bird preened and rested until Nick and I left.

Describe the bird: The bird was a medium-sized gull, similar in size to nearby California Gulls, although at the large end of the range of Californias. The most noticeable aspect of the bird was its mantle, which was two to three shades darker than the nearby California's. The bill was mostly black, with a pale base. It appeared fairly slender, but this may have been due to the color. It was noticeably smaller than that of a Western Gull, however. The forehead was white, as was the chin and throat. The head was whitish with a strong dark smudge around the eye, fading slightly over the crown. The nape was whitish with faint smudges. The mantle appeared dark grayish-brown, with a thin pale scapular crescent. The tertials were dark gray-brown with thin pale crescent. Once the bird shuffled the tertials, which then appeared to have pale edging, and possibly a small amount of internal mottling. The primaries were black. The throat and undersides were white, with dark brown smudging on the flanks and the sides of the lower breast. The overall impression of the bird while resting was dark brown rather than gray. **In flight:** The head and underparts were whitish, the mantle was dark gray-brown. The outer primaries were black, inner primaries and secondaries dark brown, showing little contrast with the outer primaries and none with the secondary coverts. The secondaries had a faint white trailing edge. The rump was bright white, the brightest part of the flying bird. The tail was white with a wide, broken black bar. The inner 2-4 rectrices were entirely white. I received an impression of white outer edges to the tail, but did not see this clearly. The underwings appeared pale, whitish mottled with tan, giving an impression once of a diagonal bar on the coverts. The bird gave a long-winged impression in flight, although this was not noticeable on the water. However, on the water I was comparing the bird primarily to California Gulls, which are noticeably long-winged as well.

Describe the bird's song and call if heard: None heard.

Describe the habitat in which you found the bird: The bird was in the center of Lake Loveland, which is roughly 50 acres in size and surrounded by residential neighborhoods.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species: California Gull: This bird was too dark, and had a mostly dark bill, as opposed to the sharply delineated two-toned bill typical of even 1st winter California Gulls.

Ring-billed Gull: The bird was noticeably larger and much darker. The size of the bird also rules out Common or Mew Gull.

Herring Gull: This bird was too dark for a Herring Gull and too small for any but a tiny minority of Herring Gulls.

Other dark-backed gulls are equal to or greater than Herring Gull in size, with heavier bills.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species: This is only the 3rd Lesser Black-backed Gull I have seen. I have seen thousands of California, Ring-billed, and Herring Gulls. I have observed Western and Yellow-footed Gulls in California. I have also observed more than a dozen Greater Black-backed Gulls in several plumages on Lake Michigan. I have never seen a Slaty-backed Gull.

List books if they helped in your identification: The initial ID was made without any, and the notes were written before referring to any guides.

This report was written from notes taken approximately 30 minutes after observation.

Reporting observer: Paul Sweet
Signature: Paul Sweet

Address:

1527 W. Mt. Ave #1
Ft. Collins CO 80521