

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD 

ACCEPTED (7-0)

1/26/98

**Species:** Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)**Date:** 20 December 1998      **Number seen:** one      **Sex:** ?      **Plumage:** Def. Basic**Locality:** Near Cañon City**Elevation:** about 5300'**Nearest town:** Cañon City**County:** Fremont**Time observed:** about 8:05 - 8:15 MST**Duration of observation:** about 10 minutes

**Description:** While participating on the Penrose CBC, I heard about an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (LBBG) at the Valco Company's gravel pit ponds near Cañon City. I immediately headed there and quickly found the bird lying down on the shore with a couple adult Ring-billed Gulls (RBGU), an adult California Gull (CAGU), and a Basic I Herring Gull (HERG). It was considerably larger and larger-headed than the nearby RBGUs, larger than the CAGU, and smaller than the HERG. The mantle was noticeably darker gray than that of the CAGU and much darker than that of the RBGUs. Its head was strongly streaked, but with no particular concentration around the eyes. The bill was bright yellow with a large red gonydeal spot and no dark markings. The eyes were yellow. The bird had a thin, white scapular crescent, smaller than that shown by the CAGU, but much larger than that shown by the RBGUs. It had a sizable tertial crescent and long primary extension beyond the tail and white tips to the primaries. Its underparts were white. It flew around the ponds for about a minute at one point and returned to the spot it had left. In flight, the legs were obviously yellow and the dark gray of the wing coverts contrasted with the black primary tips, but not very strongly. Primary 10 had a large white mirror and P9 had no mirror. The underside of the secondaries were gray, contrasting with the white wing linings. The tail was white with no dark markings.

**Similar species eliminated:** CAGU is eliminated by the darkness of the mantle (even darker than nominate CAGU), eye color, and bill pattern; Great Black-backed Gull (GBBG) ruled out by size (would dwarf RBGU), mantle color, and leg color; *smithsonianus* Herring Gull eliminated by size, mantle color, and leg color. Other, darker forms of Herring Gull (*vegae*, *taimyrensis*, *heuglini*) ruled out by mantle color, size, and, for some, leg color. Black-tailed Gull is ruled out by size and plumage pattern.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** No vocalizations heard.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen >50 *graellsii* LBBGs on the Great Lakes and the East Coast, bazillions of *smithsonianus* HERGs, 10s of 1000s of GBBGs, and 1000s of CAGUs. I have not seen any other form of Herring Gull nor Black-tailed Gull.

**Light conditions:** Bright with the sun behind me

**Optical equipment used:** Kowa 30x and Zeiss 7x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest approach at about 30 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Dave Johnson and Dave Silverman

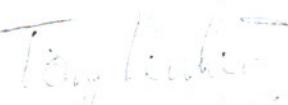
**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** Brandon Percival (finder), Chris Wood, Peter Gaede, and Bill Maynard

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** I photographed the bird perched and in flight with Canon 300mm with 1.4 converter and 100 ISO Kodak slide film.

**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none      **b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:** 

**Address:** Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 29 December 1998 from notes written at the time of the sighting