

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD *ACCEPTED (7-0)**Rec'd 12.98***Species:** Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)**Date:** 21 December 1998 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** ? **Plumage:** Def. Basic**Locality:** Near Rocky Ford**Elevation:** about 1320 m**Nearest town:** Rocky Ford**County:** Otero**Time observed:** between about 10:30 - 11:00 and 13:15 - 13:35 MST**Duration of observation:** about 15 minutes, off and on

Description: While participating on the Rocky Ford CBC, I found an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (LBBG) at a small pond east of Rocky Ford along the north side of US 50. I was truly amazed, as this was the third consecutive CBC on which I'd seen an individual of that species! Therefore, I tried hard to turn it into a California Gull (CAGU), but was unsuccessful due to the fact that it was obviously a LBBG. It was much larger than the nearby Ring-billed Gulls (RBGU) and its mantle was noticeably darker gray than that of RBGUs. During the afternoon viewing, there was a Basic I Herring Gull (HERG) available for comparison, though not directly. The LBBG appeared smaller in comparison. 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, but it was 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 pond at one point, but returned to swimming in the pond. 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. This bird was obviously different than the bird I found at Pueblo Reservoir, but seemed very similar to the bird on the Penrose CBC.

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 mantle color and leg color. Other, darker forms of Herring Gull (*vegae*, *taimyrensis*, *heuglini*) ruled out by mantle color and 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 *graeellsii* 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 65 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Peter Gaede, Sue Bonfield, Mark Janos, and Stan Oswald

Other observers who saw the bird independently: Brandon Percival and Chris Wood

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph the bird.

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: 30 December 1998 from notes written at the time of the sighting