

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull

Number: 1 second-basic

Location: Douglas Reservoir, Larimer County, Colorado

Habitat: large lake

Date: 6,7 January 1999

Time: 4:17-4:35 p.m. (6 January)

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 ½ West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): m.ob.

ACCEPT 7-0

Rec'd 3/99 upl

Description of bird(s): On the 6th, I was scanning a small flock of gulls resting on the ice near the northwest end of the lake when I spotted a darker-mantled bird. I immediately recognized the bird as a Lesser Black-backed Gull. I studied the bird at length, and returned on 7 January to further study the bird. The bird was slightly smaller than a Herring Gull and noticeably larger than a Ring-billed Gull. The bird had a striking dark-mantled, pale-headed appearance that was distinctive, even at a great distance. The bill was stout and almost entirely black with a faint pale area near the base of the lower mandible. The head and neck were white with some brown mottling on the nape and sides of the neck. There was a darker area surrounding the eye. The mantle and upperwings appeared dark-colored when the bird was perched. In flight, the dark-winged appearance was striking with no white on the upperwing. The tail was white with a broad black terminal band and striking white rump and uppertail coverts. The legs were flesh-colored.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, mantle color, tail pattern, bill color, and leg color eliminated other gulls, especially second-basic Herring Gull.

Previous experience with species: I have seen >100 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (all ages) in North Carolina, plus 10-15 each in Iowa and Nebraska.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with clear skies and the sun behind me. Estimated viewing distance was 400m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 6 January 1999

CFO-RC-FILE#: 1999-61

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

Red 3/89 wpl

Results: _____

Species:	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
	(Common Name)	(Scientific Name)

Date(s) of occurrence: January 8-9, 1999

Number of birds seen: 1

Sex: Unknown

Plumage: Sub-adult (probably Basic II)

Exact location: Douglas Lake, north of Fort Collins

Elevation: Approx. 4900 feet

County: Larimer

Nearest town: Wellington, CO

Length of Observation: About 15 min.

Time(s) of Observation: 7:05-7:15 (Jan. 8), about 10:30-10:35 (Jan 9)

Other observers who saw the bird with you:
Dick Maxfield, Dave Ely, Bill Lisowsky (Jan 9)

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): Steve Dinsmore (Jan 7)

Light conditions [quality; direction relative to bird(s) position]:
Jan 8, poor light due to pre-dawn and heavy cloud bank on East horizon. Jan 9, excellent mid-morning backlight.

Optical equipment used: Swift Panther telescope, 15-45x zoom. Observed mainly at 45x.

Distance from bird (estimated unless otherwise noted):
Jan 8 100-300 m; Jan 9 600 m.

Was the bird photographed? No.

If so, have you submitted photos?

Who took the photographs?

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred:

Lake/Reservoir partly frozen. Bird was observed resting on ice, flying, and resting on water.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying; feeding; habits; behaviors used in identifying the species or in supporting the identification):

First resting on ice in sitting position; then flying back and forth. On Jan 9, resting in sitting position on open water.

Describe the bird in detail: This is the most important part of this report. Include overall size and shape, and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings, and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the (bird(s). Describe other details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, etc. that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted: you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches, or copy of field notes):

A gull intermediate in size between Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull (HERG), with which it was associating. Field marks noted were: mostly dark bill with basal quarter pale, head whitish with the area around the base of the bill the whitest. Rump and base of tail white. Upperparts (back and wings, and outer tail) otherwise mostly dark brownish, with darker primaries. Underparts whitish. A thin whitish terminal band in the tail was noted, and the thickness of the dark subterminal band was narrower in the central rectrices. In flight, the wings were long and narrow, relative to other gulls.

I believe this bird to be identical to an individual observed at Lake Loveland on 12/13/98.

Describe the bird's song and calls if heard: None

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:

Elimination of HERG, *Larus argentatus*: HERG, although similar in size and shape, never would appear as the combination of dark on the upperparts and of light on the head and underparts, as exhibited by this bird. Basic I HERG that are dark brown would be so on both upper- and under-parts, with the exception of a whitish head. Furthermore, Basic I HERG would not show the contrast between white rump and dark tail. Basic II HERG would be much paler gray on the back.

Elimination of HERG, *L. a. heuglini*: This dark subspecies averages larger than *L. a. smithsonianus*, the North American subspecies of HERG.

Elimination of Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*: Size was too small for this species. Furthermore, all plumages except Basic I would show some black in the upperparts. Basic I plumage would show more mottling, an effect of broad white edges to back and wing feathers that was absent on this bird.

Elimination of Slaty-backed Gull, *Larus shistisagus*: Juvenile of this species shares much in common with the observed bird, but should have a dark rump, head and underparts, and should be size of HERG.

Elimination of other "Black-backed" Gulls: This bird was too small for Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*) or Yellow-footed Gull (*L. livens*), both species that are not known to wander far from their respective ranges on the west coast of North America. Kelp Gull, a South American species that has bred in coastal North America in the Gulf of Mexico, also has notably larger bill and would show more black on the mantle.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I have birded actively in the United States from 1973-present, mainly in the East, and have had extensive experience with *L. argentatus smithsonianus* and *L. marinus*. Within the last 15 years, I have observed at least 10 *L. fuscus*, in plumages Basic II, and Basic Definitive. I have paid closer attention to gull identification within the last 2 years, during which time I have carefully studied several *L. fuscus* and many HERG in Colorado. I have never observed Basic I *L. fuscus*.

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how this influenced you identification (during and after observation):

National Geographic field guide, Gulls, 2nd Ed., by PJ Grant. Plumage characteristics of most similar species were reviewed in Grant's book.

This report was made from notes taken during observation.

Reporting observer: Nicholas Komar

Signature: Nicholas Komar 3/4/99

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BILL LISOWSKY
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2919 Silverplume Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Observer: Nick Komar

DATE

1/8/99

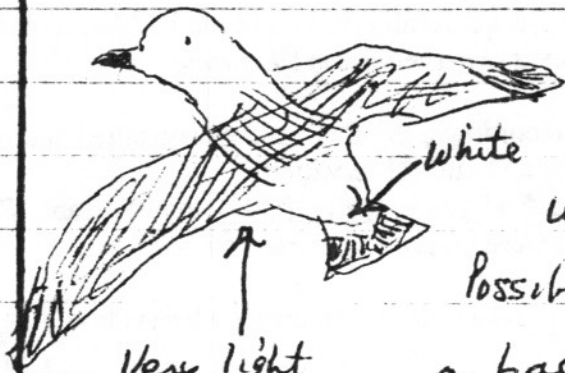
Douglas Lake

LB BG B2, sex unknown

7:05-7:15, overcast, pre-dawn, ~25°F



bill, outer $\frac{3}{4}$ dark
feathers around base of
bill lighter, almost white,
than rest of head.



Very light
underneath

Outer pp very dark
Mantle, almost
uniform dark brown.
Possibly more slaty gray
on back - poor light

Thick, dark subterminal tail band,
thinner in middle.

Overall size similar to HERG;
long-winged appearance in flight +
setting. $d \approx 0.2$ km