

1999 - 67

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Number: up to 3 (2 second-basic, 1 fourth-basic)  
Location: Warren L., Larimer Co., Colorado  
Habitat: large lake  
Date: 14, 15, 20, and 22 November 1999  
Time: 10:35-11:10 a.m. (14 November)  
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 ½ West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521  
Others who saw bird(s): Joe Fontaine

ACCEPT 7-0  
Rcd 1/21/00 mpe

Description of bird(s): When Joe and I arrived on the south shore of Warren Lake on the 14<sup>th</sup>, we found a large flock of gulls feeding with some goldeneye in the center of the lake. We had scanned the flock several times when I spotted a dark-mantled gulls resting on the water. The bird had almost exactly the same appearance as a bird I documented earlier (August through early October) at nearby Timnath Reservoir and Strauss Cabin Lake. Features I noted included the generally pale-headed, dark-backed appearance, size slightly larger than a California Gull but smaller than a Herring Gull, a dark bill with a flesh-colored base, a black mantle and upperwing, the lack of a pale "window" on the upperwing, a white tail with a narrow black subterminal band, pinkish legs, and a pale head with faint gray or gray-brown mottling. After a few minutes, we noticed that there were two gulls in this identical plumage. On the basis of the above description, we concluded they were Lesser Black-backed Gulls in second-basic plumage; the tail band was narrower than the bird I had seen earlier in the fall and there was no evidence that any of the flight feathers were still being molted.

While we were watching the above two birds, I noticed a third Lesser Black-backed Gull in adult plumage. This bird was similar in size and structure to the above two individuals. This bird had a very dark gray mantle and upperwing, noticeably darker than those of a California Gull. Other features noted included the yellow eye, black outer primaries with a large white mirror on p10, white tail, and heavy brown streaking/mottling around the eye and on the crown and nape. The bill was mostly yellow with a large dark smudge on the proximal one third of the bill. Because the bird resembled an adult in all other aspects, I aged the bird as a fourth-basic (see Grant 1986 for a discussion of this plumage). I have seen several Lesser Black-backed Gulls in this plumage in Nebraska and Iowa.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, bill color and shape, eye color (fourth-basic bird), pattern of the upperwings, tail pattern, and leg color should eliminate other large gulls, especially Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls.

Previous experience with species: I am very familiar with Lesser Black-backed Gulls, mostly from birding in North Carolina, Iowa, and Nebraska. I am also familiar with most of the other large, dark-mantled gulls including Great Black-backed, Western, and Slaty-backed Gulls.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent. Estimated viewing distance was usually 150-200m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

References consulted: Grant (1986) Gulls: A guide to identification.

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 15 November 1999

1999-67

Rcd 1/31/00 upl

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

CFO-RC FILE X: \_\_\_\_\_

RESULTS: \_\_\_\_\_

Print this page and then fill out. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species (please include common and scientific name): Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*

Date(s) of Observation: 14 Nov, 1999

Number of birds seen: 3

Sex: unknown

Plumage: 2 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic, 1 4<sup>th</sup> Basic

Exact location: Warren Lake, Fort Collins

County: Larimer

Nearest town: Fort Collins

Elevation: ~5000 feet

Length of observation: ~30 minutes

Time(s) of observation: ~1015-1045

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Steven J. Dinsmore

Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): Unknown

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position): Good light. We were looking N, NE at the birds the majority of the time. Occasionally we had to look directly east which lowered the viewing quality.

Optical equipment used: Bushnell Spacemaster, 20-45x. Orion 8x42 Binoculars

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): 50m

Was bird(s) photographed? No

If so, have you submitted photos?

Who took the photographs?

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

The LBBG were part of a large flock of gulls (California, Ring-billed, and Herring) and Common Goldeneyes (~50) that were actively feeding in a portion of the lake. The gull flock was composed of approximately 200 California Gulls, 150 Ring-billed Gulls, and 10 Herring Gulls.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the species or in supporting the identification): All three Lesser Black-backed Gulls were actively foraging. This involved actively swimming as well as short flights with the gull flock. There were no observable differences in behavior between the three birds.

Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the 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 important 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 field notes):



## Second Basic Individuals (2)

Both birds were extremely similar in appearance to one another. As far as I could tell, they were at the same stage in their plumage sequence so I will describe them together. In size, they were slightly larger than the surrounding California Gulls but were much smaller than the Herring Gulls. The mantle was slightly darker than the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic California Gulls present. The difference in coloration was subtle but clearly discernable as I scanned over the flock. Additionally, both birds had extensive streaking on the head giving them a more hooded look than the California gulls present. Bill size and coloration were also noticeably different in the Lesser Black-backed gulls. The bill was all dark with a pale tip that was visible when the head was turned. Also, the bill appeared to be slightly thicker in both birds relative to the California Gulls.

## Fourth Basic Individual (1)

This bird stood out from the flock much more strongly than the 2<sup>nd</sup> basic birds. One of the most striking aspects of the bird's appearance was the extensive streaking on the posterior portion of the head which lent it a helmeted look. The mantle was much darker than the surrounding California Gulls. In size, the bird was not noticeably different from the California Gulls. However, the bill was thicker and the red gonys spot was much darker and deeper in color. On two occasions, I was able to watch the bird fly through my scope. On both occasions I was able to see yellow legs as the bird landed.

Describe birds call or song: No vocalizations were attributable to the birds in question.

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: All three birds were similar in size to California Gulls and markedly smaller than Herring Gulls present. This eliminates Greater Black-backed as a possible consideration. The mantle on all three birds was clearly darker than that of the surrounding California Gulls. Also, the coloration of the bill of the 2 2<sup>nd</sup> basic birds was consistent with that of Lesser Black-backed and not with California Gull.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I have seen Lesser Black-backed gulls on two prior occasions. I saw one 1<sup>st</sup> basic bird off the coast of Maine in 1995 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> basic bird last winter (Jan 1999) at Douglas Reservoir, Larimer Co. I was fortunate to get excellent looks at the 2<sup>nd</sup> basic bird earlier this year.

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): After the observation I consulted P.J. Grant's book, Gulls.

This report was made from notes made during xxx or after xxx observation, or later from memory

Date of written report: 7 December, 1999

Reporting observer: Joe Fontaine

Signature:



Address: 3108 Sumac St.  
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Send report to:  
Colorado Birds Record Committee  
c/o Bill Lisowsky

11/14/99

Fossil Crk

Revs

WeGr 6

EaGr 4

PBGr 1

CaGo 1000  
mostly small  
race

RoGo 1

Mall 50

NoSh 5-6,000

GaeW 12

AmW: 10

CanW 8

Redh 12

LeSc 3

RNDW 1

CoGo 20

Buff 2

RNDu 15

CWTe 3

Kill 16

RBGu 30

CaGu 30 not  
juv.

~~HeGu~~ ~~8~~ juv

HeGu 8 4 juv  
4 ad

BoGu 3

RTHa 3

BeKi 1

NoFl 3

NoSh 1 ad.

NosS

Warren Lk

200 CaGu 5-7 juv

150 RBGu

~~HeGu~~

10 HeGu

2<sup>nd</sup> ThGu

3 LBBG 2 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic  
1 4<sup>th</sup> Basic

CoGo 50

CaGo 35

Mall 4

BeKi 1

Dowol

Black-backed

2<sup>nd</sup> Basic - slightly larger  
than CA gulls

- Bill all dark  
w/ pale tip

- mantle slightly  
dark

- more hooded

- bill slightly thicker

4<sup>th</sup> Basic

- Mantle much  
darker

- bill thicker

- Red mark on

bill more bold

- "evil" look

- Extremely hooked  
look on

Anterior part  
of head

- Size not class. from  
CA Gull

- yellow legs