

ACCEPT 7-0

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD  UNUSUAL RECORD **Species:** Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)**Date:** Dec 4, 1999**Number seen:** one**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** Basic (adult)**Locality:** Cherry Creek State Park**Elevation:** 5,350 ft**Nearest town:** Aurora**County:** Arapahoe**Time observed:** 1450-1615 hrs**Duration of observation:** Seen for a total of about 1 hr**Description:**

An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was observed on the water ~100 meters from the swim beach at the north-eastern end of the reservoir. It was in a mixed flotilla of Ring-billed (RBGU) (*Larus delawarensis*) and California gulls (CAGU) (*Larus californicus*). It was sitting on the water the entire time.

**Description:**

Medium-sized gull, slightly larger than nearby RBGU and CAGU; yellow bill of medium build with large red gony's spot; head basally white with heavy dark streaking; eye yellowish; mantle and wings dark gray, several shades darker than CAGU (easily stood out from CAGUs); wingtips black with white primary edging; p10 was not grown in completely and mirrors only partially visible on folded underwing; body white; tail pattern was not noted.

**Separation from similar species:**

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)—smaller size; mantle/wing coloration dark gray, not black; bill not massively heavy.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)—larger size in direct comparison; mantle/wing coloration several shades darker; head more heavily streaked; eye yellow.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):**

None

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?**

I have observed a total of 2 adults, 1 each in Louisiana and California

**Light conditions:** Excellent at beginning of observation (above and behind), then eventually setting

**Optical equipment used:** Zeiss 7x42, Kowa 20-60x

**Distance, and how estimated:** 100 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Tony Leukering

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** David Quesenberry, Ric Olson

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** None

**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:** Doug Faulkner

**Signature:** *Douglas W Faulkner*

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

**Date report was written:** This report was written on Jan 17, 2000 from notes made the evening of the observation

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD        UNUSUAL RECORD X

ACCEPT 7-0

Rec 1/5/00 wpl

**Species:** Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)**Date:** 4 December 1999**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Def. Basic**Locality:** Cherry Creek Res.**Elevation:** about 5350'**Nearest town:** Aurora**County:** Arapahoe**Time observed:** between about 14:50 - 16:30 MST**Duration of observation:** about 20 minutes, off and on

**Description:** Doug Faulkner and I went to Cherry Creek Reservoir to look for the Basic I and Basic III Lesser Black-backed Gulls (LBBG) that had been reported by Stevens at the site on previous days. We started at the swim beach on the northeast side of the reservoir and we had only been there for a few minutes when Doug found a LBBG in Definitive Basic. Except for a brief excursion to the marina (during which time, Quesenberry and Olson showed up and found the gull independently), we stayed at the swim beach to watch gulls come in off the landfill to roost on the lake. Though we stayed until after sunset and eventually saw 800-1000 gulls, we did not see any other LBBGs.

The gull was in with about 50 other gulls, about half-and-half California (CAGU) and Ring-billed (RBGU) gulls. The light angle was a bit odd (mostly sidelight) and the sun was lowering, so the bird did not stand out that obviously. The head was white with strong brown streaking. The forehead was only somewhat slanted, the eyes were yellow, and the bill was yellow with a large, red gonydeal spot (with no black) that just barely strayed onto the upper mandible. The bill was about the same length as the bills of the nearby CAGUs, but was much thicker and with an obvious gonydeal angle. The mantle and wings were a medium gray, noticeably darker than that of the nearby CAGUs, but with the lighting conditions, not tremendously obvious. However, I was able to find it solely on upperparts coloration almost every time I scanned through the gulls on the water.

The black primaries had obvious white tips, two of which extended beyond the tip of the tail (which was white). Looking at the underside of the far wingtip, I could discern no mirror on the outermost primary, but had no problem seeing the P10 mirrors on both RBGU and CAGU using the same technique. We were all stymied by this, as LBBG should have three primary tips beyond the tail tip and an obvious P10 mirror. So, we scrutinized it carefully. We were rewarded, as a couple times when the bird was preening, it slightly elevated the wingtips. This enabled us to see the white tip of the still-growing P10. It was only about half-grown, extending about to the tip of the longest tertial. The underparts were entirely white. I did not see the legs.

**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 ruled out by size (would dwarf CAGU) and mantle color; *smithsonianus* Herring Gull (HERG) eliminated by mantle color. Other, darker forms of HERG (*vegae*, *taimyrensis*, *heuglini*) ruled out by mantle color, size, and, for some, eye color. Black-tailed Gull is ruled out by size and plumage pattern. Kelp and Slaty-backed gulls eliminated by mantle color, size, and bill pattern and size.

**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 >60 *graellsii* LBBGs on the Great Lakes and the East Coast and four previously in CO, bazillions of *smithsonianus* HERGs, >125 *vegae* HERGs, 10s of 1000s of GBBGs, 1000s of CAGUs, and >75 SBGUs. I have not seen any other of the darker, Asian HERGs, Black-tailed Gull, nor Kelp Gull.

**Light conditions:** Lowering and setting sun to my left

**Optical equipment used:** Leica 32x

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest approach at about 25 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Doug Faulkner, Dave Quesenberry, Ric Olson

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** none

**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 Picadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 11 December 1999 from notes written about an hour after the sighting