

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X

ACCEPT 7-0

Recd 1/5/00 wpl

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*)**Date:** 12 December 1999**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Basic IV**Locality:** Horseshoe Reservoir**Elevation:** about 5000'**Nearest town:** Loveland**County:** Larimer**Time observed:** between about 14:00 - 14:15 MST **Duration of observation:** about 15 minutes

Description: Since I was on a roll this day (I had already seen two Lesser Black-backed Gulls (LBBG) this day), I went back to Horseshoe Res. to see if there were any good gulls there, particularly LBBG. As I came up to the southwest corner of the reservoir, I noticed a large number of gulls standing on the ice, so I stopped to take a look. About the first bird I put my binocs on was a LBBG! I studied it for a few minutes, then my got my loaf of gull bread to try to entice it closer for photos. Though it did not come in to the bread, it did chase after gulls that did get bread, thus I got to see it fly around a few times for as much as a minute at a time.

It was a largish gull, smaller than nearby Herring Gulls (HERG) and larger than nearby California Gulls (CAGU), with a dark gray mantle and wings. It had a somewhat rounded head, but with a fairly slanted forehead. The bill was thicker than that of a nearby California Gull (CAGU) with an obvious, but not strong gonydeal angle. The bill was yellow with a large, red gonydeal spot which was bordered proximally by a vertical blackish smudge that stretched from the gonys to the cutting edge of the upper mandible. The head was white and heavily-streaked with dark brown, with the streaks coalescing around the eyes, forming vague eye patches. The forehead and chin were virtually unstreaked and the nape was heavily streaked. The eyes were whitish-yellow.

The upperparts were a medium to dark gray, much darker than that of all nearby CAGUs, but still with obvious contrast with the black primaries. The primary coverts were gray and contrasted with the mostly black outer primaries. The primary tips extended beyond the tail tip, but P10 was still growing, falling just short of the tail tip. The growing P10 did not have a white mirror as a full adult would have, but all primaries were tipped thinly with white. The secondaries also had white tips, wider than those of the primaries, but these tips still covered only about 1/4 of the visible length of the secondaries. The tail and underparts were white. The legs varied in different lighting situations from yellowish-pink to pinkish-yellow. Regardless of the light, they were not strongly colored and differed strongly from the bright pink of the legs of the nearby HERGs and the bright yellow of the nearby adult RBGUs.

Similar species eliminated: California Gull (CAGU) eliminated by size, mantle color, and bill size and shape. HERG (*smithsonianus*) ruled out by mantle color and leg color. Other, darker forms of HERG ruled out by size (they should be larger). Slaty-backed Gull (SBGU) eliminated by wing pattern (pattern of primaries and of the secondaries, the visible parts of which should be mostly white), mantle color (the bird was not virtually black-backed), and leg color. Kelp Gull (KEGU) ruled out by bill (size and shape) and by mantle color. Great Black-backed Gull eliminated by size, leg color, and by upperparts color and 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 >65 *graellsii* LBBGs on the Great Lakes and the East Coast and six 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, nor have I seen KEGU.

Light conditions: Bright with the sun behind me and somewhat to my left

Optical equipment used: Leica 32x and Zeiss 7x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest approach at about 35 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: none

Other observers who saw the bird independently: unknown, though this might be one of the LBBGs that Steve Dinsmore has been seeing in Larimer Co. recently

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

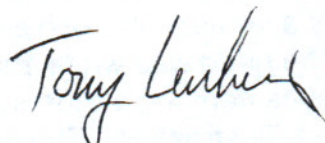
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

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: 12 December 1999 from notes written immediately after sighting