

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL - Larus glaucescens

23-~~12~~-28
19
accepted

DATE: April 11, 1989.

TIME OF OBSERVATION: 9:30 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.-MD

LOCATION: Cherry Creek Reservoir.

NEAREST TOWN: Aurora.

COUNTY: Arapahoe.

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD:

None.

Harold Holt - 2001 West 92nd Avenue, Federal Heights, Colorado 80221 joined me at 3:30 P.M. and obtained a number of color photographs as close as 125

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 10X50 Bushnell Binoculars; 15X-60X B/L Zoom Telescope.

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Sky obscured by occasional light snow until about 2:30 P.M. becoming overcast to partly cloudy; Wind, north 5-10 MPH; 36°-40°.

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: Sunlight was not a factor until after 3:00 P.M. when it occasionally poked through the clouds shining directly upon the bird from behind the observers.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 125' up to 400' (estimated).

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: One.

SEX: Unknown.

PLUMAGE: Second-winter immature.

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: Located the gull at the boat marina along the west shore of the reservoir resting on a tire (there is a string of old tires protecting the marina serving as a breakwater that the gulls and sometimes Black-crowned Night-Herons (Nycticorax nycticorax) like to sit upon). Shortly after finding this bird, it flew about 75' to where a Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) sitting on the water was trying to swallow a rather large fish. The Glaucous-winged Gull forced the Herring Gull to release its catch, took the fish in his beak and proceeded to swim with it in his beak towards the beach directly in front of me. Upon reaching the shallow water, it stood up and began swallowing the fish head-first. After some degree of difficulty, it succeeded in swallowing the fish, washed off his beak in the water and returned to roost on a tire. I returned to the area several times during the rest of the morning while I was birding elsewhere in the area. The gull remained content to rest on the tires, did some minor preening and once in a while dropped into the water for some lazy swimming among the tires. There were some 25 Herring Gulls in the area along with 5 California Gulls (Larus californicus) and a single, first-winter (and very pale) Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri). There was no interaction between these three species of gulls during the rest of the time that I was able to observe them in the morning.

I returned to the area after lunch at 1:45 P.M. and relocated the bird still sitting on the tires. I put in a call to Harold Holt and asked him to come out and see if he could obtain some photographs of this bird. Harold arrived around 3:30 P.M. and together we walked out on the boat dock at the marina approaching to within 125' of where the gull continued to sit on a tire. Harold was able to get a number of photographs from this distance. I was able to get the bird in my telescope at 30X from 125' thus being able to clearly see great details of its plumage. The

bird refused to fly despite our urging which precluded an inflight photograph.

HEAD AND NECK: Head and neck grayish-white with some diffused, brownish streaking particularly on the crown and nape.

EYES AND LORES: Dark eyes with a dark smudge about the eyes.

LOWER AND UPPER MANDIBLES: Very large, thick, all black bill sharply upturned at the gonys.

LEGS AND FEET: Legs pinkish, feet brighter pink.

UPPERPARTS: Mantle beginning to show a noticeable amount of light, pearl-gray. Rest of upperparts (lower nape, rump and uppertail coverts) uniform grayish-brown like first-winter bird. There was little or no mottling.

UNDERPARTS: Throat and breast areas whitish with brownish mottling. Bell sides and flanks mostly uniform, grayish-brown. Crissum lighter with brown barring.

RETRICES: Fairly short, square tail, uniformly brownish-gray and lacking a dark subterminal band on uppertail. Individual retrices with pale edges and tips.

WINGS: Fairly short, stout wings barely extending beyond the tail which gave the bird a rather blunt profile. Upperwing primaries noticeably pale (whitish) and worn and not translucent. Secondaries and coverts of upperwing uniform grayish-brown with pale edges and tips. Entire underwing was silvery.

VOCALIZATION: None heard.

HABITAT: Fresh water reservoir on eastern high plains.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*): Immature Thayer's Gulls are quite variable and I am not certain what typical second-winter birds look like. However, Thayer's Gulls in any plumage are much smaller in size (less bulky), with a smaller, more rounded head, a considerably smaller, thinner bill and longer wings which extend well beyond the tail. There was a very pale Thayer's Gull in with the group of gulls milling around the chain of tires providing a very good comparison with the Glaucous-winged Gull. Although this was a very pale bird, the primaries were tan (darker than the rest of the upperparts) and the lower half of the uppertail was also darker than the rest of the upperparts.

GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*): Second-winter birds are whitish (some almost chalky) overall with a two-toned bill (pale at the base, dark at the tip) and translucent primaries. Also has a yellow eye.

ICELAND GULL (*Larus glaucoides*): Considerably smaller gull with a smaller bill, more rounded head and much longer wings. Much daintier in overall appearance. Second-winter birds are whitish overall but with some light gray beginning to appear on the mantle. Bill is two-toned in second-winter birds like second-winter Glaucous Gull. Eye is yellow.

HYBRIDS: These are always a possibility and Glaucous-winged Gulls are known to hybridize regularly with Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis*), but the second-winter Glaucous-winged Gull at Cherry Creek Reservoir appeared to have no visible indications of hybridization, i.e., the wings and mantle were quite uniform in color and shade and the tail also was quite even in color and shade. A hybrid would certainly have darker contrasting flight feathers and probably a darker mantle.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL: Have seen literally thousands of all ages and plumages during the past 30 years along the Pacific coast from California to British Columbia as well as along the coast of the Alaskan mainland, the Pribilof Islands and Attu Island in the Aleutians. Found and identified one immature at Antero Reservoir, Park County on July 24, 1981 (which was originally identified as an Iceland Gull!). Just recently I observed a first-winter bird at Jumbo Reservoir in Sedgwick County (March 31, 1989) which was the second record of this species for the state.

GLAUCOUS GULL: Seen a few nearly every winter (adults and immatures) on the eastern high plains of Colorado since 1968. Seen less than ten times along the central California coast in winter.

ICELAND GULL: Have seen but a few times off Long Island, New York in winter plus one bird at Churchill, Manitoba in June 1984. Have never seen in Colorado where it has never been satisfactorily recorded.

THAYER'S GULL: Have extensive experience with this variable species in winter (all ages and plumages) in Colorado since 1971. Also observed at Churchill, Manitoba in June 1984 and several times over the years in winter on the Monterey Peninsula in California.

THIS REPORT WAS WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING OBSERVATION.

OBSERVER MAKING THIS REPORT:

Jack Reddall - 4450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80111.

Jack Reddall

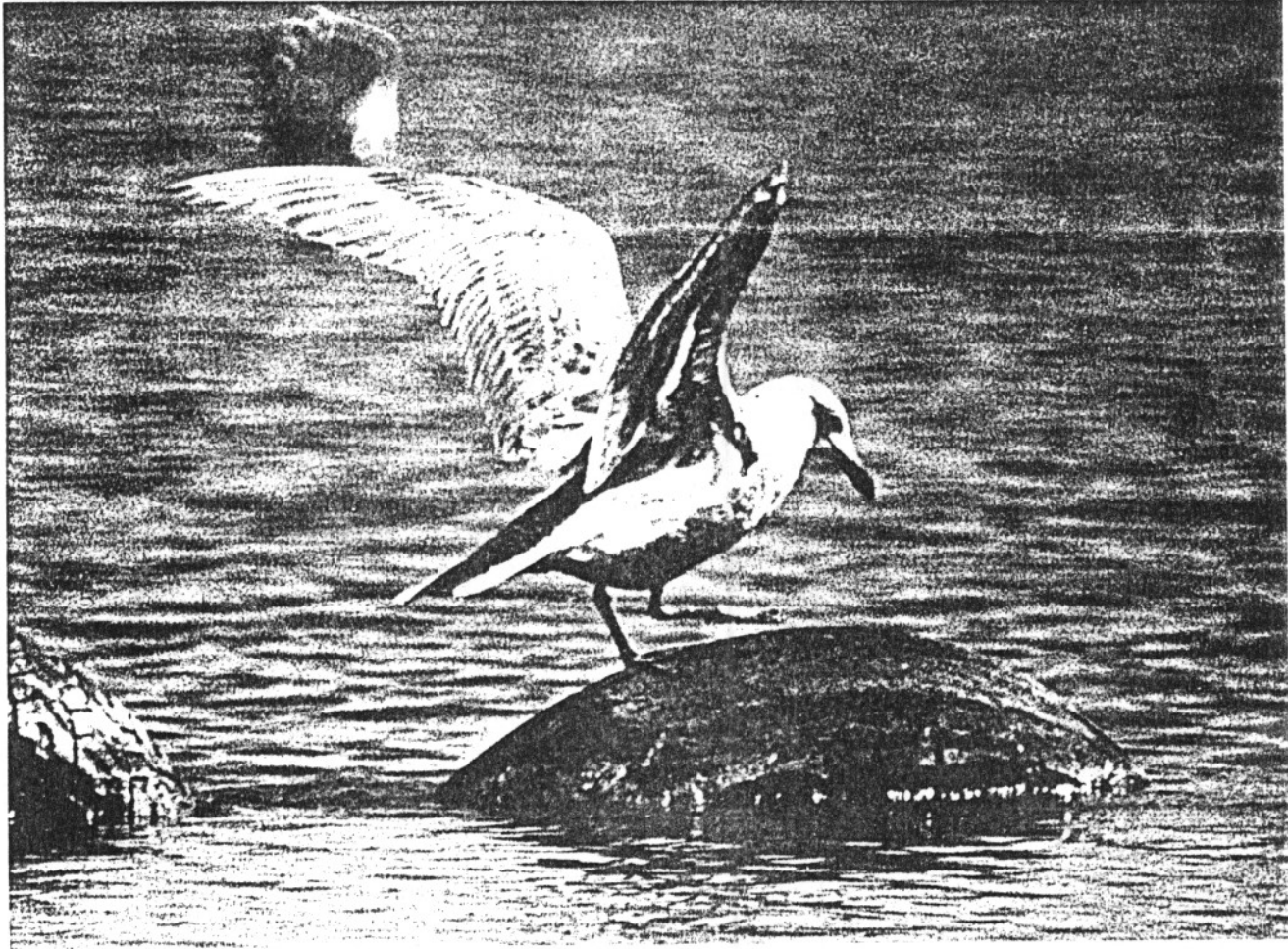
DATE: *April 13, 1989*

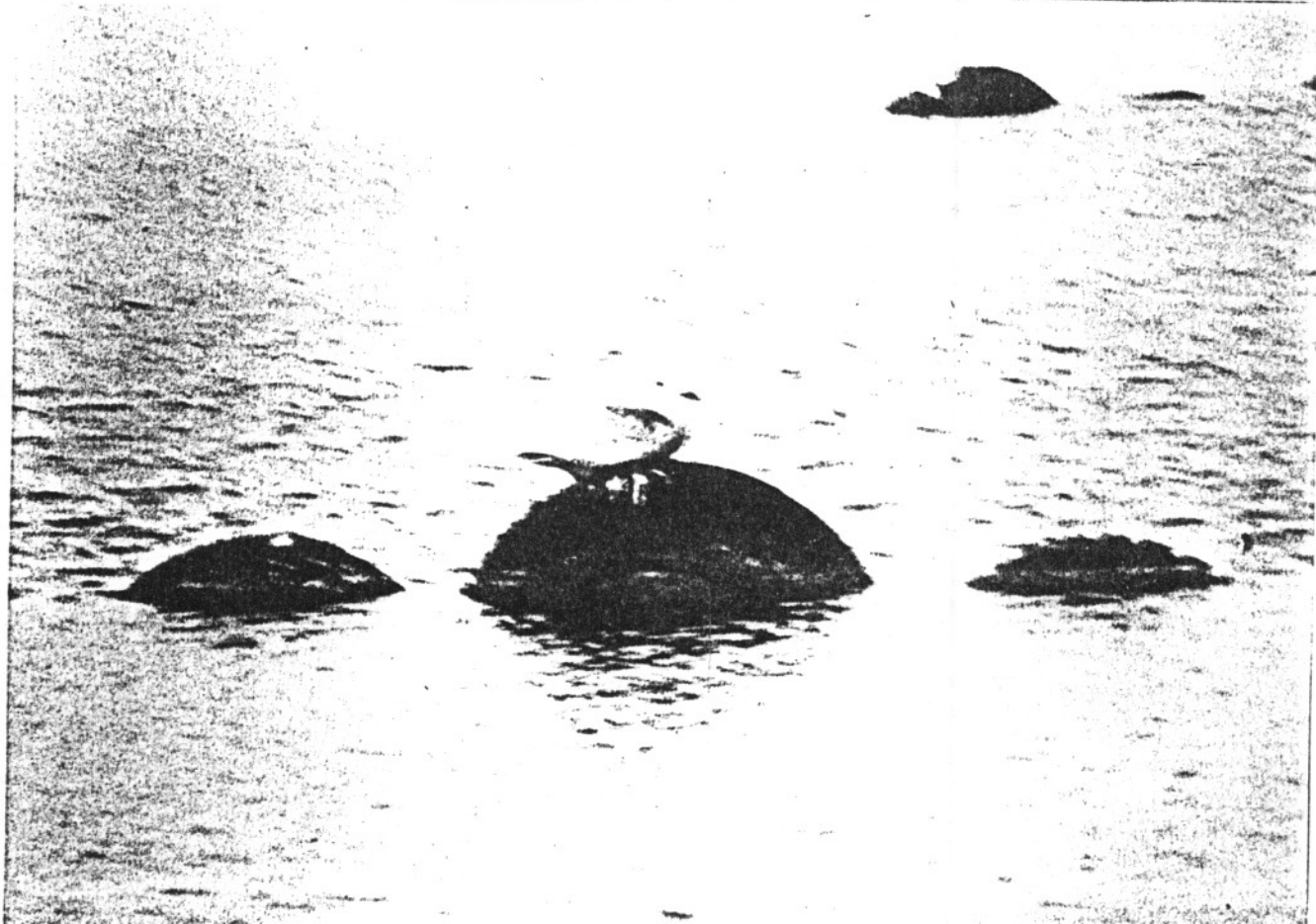
23-89-2E
accepted

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (Larus glaucescens)

Cherry Creek Reservoir SRA
Arapahoe County, Colorado

Photographed by Larry Sanders





23-89-20

Species: Glaucous-winged Gull
(Vernacular name)Larus glaucescens
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

A

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 15 April 1989 & 16 April 1989 Time Bird Seen: early pm 4-5 for ~1 1/2 hrs.
early am 4-6 to for ~15 min. (12:00 noon-14:30)

Locality: Cherry Creek Reservoir, Denver, Colo.

Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Kowa TSN-4 20-60X scope; Nikon 9x30

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: _____

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: _____ Plumage: 1st year; worn → ? molting to 2nd summer

Light conditions: High overcast w/ flat light on the 15th; high winds, p.cldy on the 16th.

Distance from bird, and how measured: 200 yds approx.

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

Perched on trees for long periods -- near marina. Often hopped to other trees, flapping; sometimes landing on water. Occasionally flew off, soaring & circling. Seemed aggressive, harassing Herring & Thayer's Gulls, sometimes driving other gulls down to water. I saw bird perched at all angles, w/ spread wings, soaring & flapping. Perched w/ Herring, Thayer's & California Gulls.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Fresh water lake & marina.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. Large gull with body ~~the~~ about the same size (or perhaps sl. larger) than Herring Gulls. Overall plumage is a very uniform - a pale sandy color with fine marbling overall. The back was not a gray color that you would expect in a second year bird. Undertail coverts obscurely barred. Head & neck less mottled than back & wings, but uniform pale tan. Wingtips (folded primaries) barely longer than tail and exactly the same shade as the secondaries & back, with narrow white fringes. Tail was very pale, nearly whitish-tan & just as pale as the rump, although rump was faintly barred. From above, in flight, the bird was remarkably concolor, essentially one even plain pale tan without darker tail band, nor secondaries or wingtips. Bill was all black with slightly paler area right at base of upper mandible in brighter light. Bill large & deeper & blunter at tip than Herring Gull, much larger & fatter than Thayer's Gull. (The second day I saw bird, in poorer light, bill looked all black.) Eye dark. Legs pale, dull pink as were feet. Compared w/ Thayer's Gull, this bird had a longer crown (less rounded & dovetailed), more sloping & powerful.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

Not heard.

List similar species and how you eliminated them: Basically pale, uniform tan coloring rules out most other gulls & all black-headed Gulls.

Herring Gull, of which several 1st & 2nd year were present is darker, more 2-toned with black wingtips & secondaries; is more black & white. Has dark tail than rump.

Glaucous Gull = would be larger, whiter & w/ 2-toned bill.

Iceland Gull = would be smaller, whiter, w/ slighter bill; would be smaller than Thayer's.

Thayer's Gull = Most similar Gull; Thayer's has smaller bill; darker wingtips, darker tail (compared w/ rump); secondaries would be darker than wing.

Why was this bird a Glaucous-winged? → Herring Gull size w/ larger, all-black bill. Uniform sandy color; concolor above without darker 1^o, 2^o or tail. Large powerful head & bill. Dull pink legs. Combine w/ direct side-by-side comparison with Herring & Thayer's. Prior experience with this and similar species:

I've seen Glaucous-winged, Glaucous, Thayer's & Herring; many of each.

This report was written from notes made during after ___ observation; from memory ___.

NAME (print): MARK JANOS

Mailing address: 1 CACTOS DR. CA JUNTA, CO 81050.

Signature: Mark Janos

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery
869 Milwaukee Street
Denver, Colorado 80206