

23-92-81

APPENDIX III

CFO-ORC FILE #

*accepted*

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

UNUSUAL RECORD

*5th state record*

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Glaucous-Winged Gull / Larus glaucescens  
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)

Date(s): March 1 through April 1, 1992

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: 1st winter to 1st spring

Lat/long: \_\_\_\_\_ Distribution Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Habitat Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Locality: Cherry Crk Reservoir, Denver Elevation: 5280 feet

Nearest town: Denver County: \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s) observed: 1st seen 5PM, Many later mid-day observations

Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): Total of at least 3 hrs, diff days

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):  
Jack Reddall, address in DFO membership list  
Duane Nelson, J. B. Hayes ditto

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):  
see above list; photos and write-up reviewed by Rich Stallcup

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):  
seen well with mid-day and back-lighting on other days (looking east in PM)  
*Pt Reyes Bird Observatory*

Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Zeiss 10x40 binocs, b and 1 25x scope

Distance and how measured: 30 feet at closest, often seen at 50 ft to 50 yds, est

If photographed, type of equipment and film: \* 800 x lens, ASA 400 black and white film  
& fuji 100 color slide film

Who else photographed the bird: J B Hayes

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):  
Seen standing on tires at marina or on beach, loafing, feeding, seen flying away or circling overhead

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field:

Size: Clearly larger and more bulky than nearby 1st winter Herring Gull.

Head larger, flat crown and bulky bill with pronounced gonysal angle, all features that eliminate Thayer's Gull. Concolor light to med brown without dark wingtips, tail



23-92-81

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL - Larus glaucescens

accepted

DATES OF OBSERVATION: March 2, 3, 5, 13, 14, 23, and 31, 1992.

TIMES OF OBSERVATIONS: March 2 (1700-1715 MST)  
March 3 (0700-0800 MST)  
March 3 (1130-1150 MST)  
March 3 (1315-1330 MST)  
March 5 (0930-1015 MST)  
March 13 (0615-0700 MST)  
March 14 (0815-0900 MST)  
March 23 (0600-0615 MST)  
March 31 (1530-1545 MST)

LOCATION: Cherry Creek Reservoir SRA, Arapahoe County, Colorado.

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: One.

PLUMAGE AND SEX: First-winter immature emerging into first-summer.

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

- 3-2-92: mostly clear; Wind, South 0-5 MPH; 68°F.
- 3-3-92: partly cloudy; Wind, variable 0-5 MPH; 35°-62°F.
- 3-5-92: mostly cloudy, light rain; Wind, calm; 40°F.
- 3-13-92: clear; Wind, Southeast 5-10 MPH; 32°F.
- 3-14-92: partly cloudy; Wind, South 5-10 MPH; 45°F.
- 3-23-92: mostly clear; Wind, Southeast 5-10 MPH; 25°F.
- 3-31-92: overcast, light rain and snow mixed; Wind, Northeast 15 MPH; 45°F.

HABITAT: Fresh-water reservoir on the eastern high plains along the front range of the Rocky Mountains.

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

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD:

Joe Roller, M.D.-13040 W. 16th Drive, Golden, Colorado 80401 (who first found the bird).

DISTANCE FROM THE BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: As close as 25 yards up to 200 yards. Estimated.

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION:

- 3-2-92: Setting sunlight directly upon the bird, but due to lateness of the day and the distance involved (200 yards), sunlight did not benefit the observation
- 3-3-92: Seen several times at various places and times around the reservoir. Sunlight not a factor due to partly cloudy sky.
- 3-5-92: Sunlight not a factor due to mostly cloudy skies and rain showers.
- 3-13-92: Early morning sunlight directly upon bird coming from observer's left side.
- 3-14-92: Intermittant sunlight directly upon bird as it stayed around a sandy tract of beach coming from behind the observer who was approximately 25 yards away at the picnic area. This was my best study of the bird over a prolonged period of time.
- 3-23-92: Bird was perched on a tire (used for a breakwater) in bright sunlight; but sunlight was coming almost directly into the observer's face and did little to enhance the observation.

3-31-92: Sunlight was not a factor due to inclement weather conditions.

BEHAVIOR AND Demeanor:

3-2-92: Observed from the "Prairie Loop Overlook" as it stood on a tree stump in the water about 200 yards from the shoreline. I watched the bird for approximately 15 minutes. On one occasion it flopped into the water and swam about for a short period before hopping back up on the stump. It eventually took off flying out over the reservoir toward the Cherry Creek dam where I lost sight of it.

3-3-92: I spotted the bird several times during the day at various places around the reservoir. I watched it for nearly an hour as it stayed around the boat marina along the west shore of the reservoir. At various times it sat upon the old tires set out as a breakwater to protect the boat moorings. This seemed to be a favorite resting spot for all the gulls in the area. Most of the time the gull just sat on the tire, looking this way and that, and not at all interested in the activity of other nearby gulls: Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) and Ring-billed Gull (Larus delawarensis). After about thirty minutes or so, the bird flew over to the shoreline near the boat ramp and took up a perch upon some rocks. The flight was strong and deliberate without any soaring or wheeling about. Again, it seemed rather lethargic and perfectly content to just stay put there on the rocks, looking this way and that, occasionally preening itself.

Shortly before lunch, I returned to the marina and found the gull again sitting out upon a tire. As before, it remained inactive. The "Tuesday Birders" showed up about this time (en masse) and took up interest in observing the gull. Shortly it took off and flew back over to the boat ramp. I quickly drove over to where it was sitting, but as I approached, the bird took off and flew away far out over the reservoir.

Early in the afternoon, I refound the bird, this time sitting with a small group of L. argentatus and L. delawarensis on a mud flat just below the "Prairie Loop Overlook". As was the case each time before that I watched it, it remained very inactive, only occasionally lifting a wing to preen-otherwise just looking around disinterestedly.

3-5-92: This time I discovered the gull about mid-morning walking along the sandy beach below the picnic tables and just beyond the boat ramp at the west side marina. As I watched, it walked back and forth rather determinedly as if looking for something. Finally it spied a dead fish lying at the water's edge. It quickly ran over to it, picked it up in its beak and began trying to swallow the fish. It was having great difficulty going about this, continually rearranging the fish in its beak while trying to gulp it down at the same time. This activity went on for a good two or three minutes before the bird was able to finally swallow the fish. Shortly, three Black-billed Magpies (Pica pica) arrived to inspect a trash barrel located up the beach in a small stand of Cottonwood trees near the picnic tables. The gull took an immediate interest in all this activity by the Magpies, flying directly up to where they were busily investigating the contents of trash bin. After alighting

it slowly approached the Magpies, stretching out its neck to curiously watch their antics. When it approached to close for comfort, the Magpies got up and left with much raucous calling. The gull then picked up a small tidbit of some sort left by the Magpies and carrying it in his beak, walked back down to the shoreline where it devoured its find. This activity was followed by some aimless wandering about the beach, going this way and that without any apparent purpose. It eventually flew off back to its perch on the old tire where it proceeded to go through a complete preening of itself. I drove back to the parking lot at the marina and watched the preening process until the gull put its head out over its back and went to sleep.

Observations on subsequent days did not provide much in the way of different activity. For the most part the gull stayed aloof from other gull species and seemed to just go it alone.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: A large, robust immature gull with short, broad wings that barely extended beyond the tail. The general overall plumage was a uniformly light brownish-tan with the uppertail and primaries just a shade darker than the mantle. The wing coverts appeared somewhat worn showing much paleness compared to the mantle. The underparts were generally darker than the upperparts being a "smudgy grayish-brown". The beak was large and deep and "horn-colored" which provided the most disconcerting feature in determining field identification. The culmen had what appeared to be a gash in it just above the nostrils. (Refer to complete discussion under "Lower and Upper Mandibles" further on in this report).

HEAD AND NECK: Crown, nape and neck pale brownish.

EYES: Eyes dark. A dark smudgy-brown surrounded the eyes extending back and over the auricular area, a very noticeable contrast with the rest of the paleness of the head and neck.

LOWER AND UPPER MANDIBLES: An obvious problem with this being a first-winter emerging first-summer L. glaucescens which the overall plumage suggested. The bill was large and deep and sharply upturned at the gonys. It was mostly "horn-colored" throughout except for a small, black (dark) area encircling the very distal end along with other small, dark areas here and there. The culmen had what looked like a gash in it just above the nostrils, with that portion of the culmen extending from the basal end to the nostrils (gash area) seemingly bending to the left as one faced the bird. The remainder of the culmen, from the gash area to the distal end, appeared to be straight and normal. Whether this gash in the culmen was caused by some trauma or was the result of a genetic problem is open to conjecture. Be that as it may, the lack of an all black bill in this first-winter plumage is certainly cause for concern as to the gull's true identity. It is possible, however, that whatever caused the deformity on the culmen, may be related in some manner to the "horn-colored" beak.

LEGS AND FEET: Pink (no evidence of banding).

UPPERPARTS: Mantle and rump uniformly pale brown but with some emerging grayish coloring along each side of the mantle (not always readily seen unless the bird positioned itself in a certain way to the light).

UNDERPARTS: Uniformly darker than upperparts roughly the same tone of the smoky area surrounding the face. Vent tan marked with dark barring.

RETRICES: Square-tailed. Uppertail: Individual retrices with brownish centers, thinly edged with pale white. Some dark barring on the upper-tail coverts. Undertail: Uniformly grayish-tan with dark barring on undertail coverts.

WINGS: Short and broad. Upperwing: Individual primaries with brownish centers thinly edged with pale white (in flight the primaries appeared slightly darker than the mantle). All coverts very pale compared with the primaries appearing very worn with some individual feathers showing considerable amount of white irregularly spotted and barred with brown. In certain postures and in certain light, the paleness of the coverts was quite striking when compared to the general color and tone of the rest of the upperparts. Underwing: Silvery throughout-linings, coverts flight feathers-most prominent in flight when compared to the upperwing.

VOCALIZATION: None heard.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

THAYER'S GULL (Larus thayeri): First-winter birds of this species are quite variable in plumage, but they are noticeably smaller in size (much less bulky) with a smaller, more rounded head and considerably smaller bill which gives this gull an overall daintier appearance. Typically, there is always a pronounced contrast in the upperwing pattern of L. thayeri due to the much darker (sometimes chocolate brown) primaries when compared to the rest of the upperwing and mantle. Also, typical first-winter L. thayeri have a broad, brown subterminal uppertail band. When sitting at rest, the wings of this species extend well beyond the end of the tail.

GLAUCOUS GULL (Larus hyperboreus): First-winter Glaucous Gull is considerably paler overall, has a two-toned bill (pale at the base with a dark tip) and translucent primaries.

ICELAND GULL (Larus glaucoides): First-winter bird has an all black bill as in typical L. glaucescens but is noticeably smaller. Has long wings which extend well beyond the tail when at rest. Like typical L. hyperboreus, the first-winter birds are very pale buffy throughout with translucent primaries. Jizz is much daintier than L. glaucescens with smaller, rounded head and much less bulk.

HYBRIDS: Always a possibility and L. glaucescens are known to hybridize regularly with Western Gulls (Larus occidentalis) which may be the case here (upperwing primaries a bit darker than the mantle). I have little experience with hybrid Glaucous-wingedXWestern Gulls so I can not rule out the possibility of this bird being a hybrid. However, my feeling is this is certainly more aligned with L. glaucescens than with L. occidentalis because of the general overall paleness of the bird.

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 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!). Have seen three other times in Colorado: March 31, 1989, one in first-winter plumage at Jumbo Reservoir SWA, Sedgwick County; April 11-15, 1989, one in second-winter plumage at Cherry Creek Reservoir SRA, Arapahoe County; May 1, 1990, one in second-winter plumage emerging into second-summer at Cherry Creek Reservoir SRA, Arapahoe County.

GLAUCOUS GULL: Seen 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 and about five times in winter on eastern Long Island (as recently as January 8, 1992 at Smith's Point County Park on Fire Island).

ICELAND GULL: Have seen but a few times off Long Island, New York (as recently as January 9, 1992 at Montauk) plus a single immature bird at Churchill, Manitoba in June 1984.

THAYER'S GULL: Have extensive experience with this variable species in winter (particularly first-winter birds) in Colorado since 1971. Also observed at Churchill, Manitoba in June 1984 and on several occasions over the years on the Monterey Peninsula in California as well as off the coast of Washington State.

HYBRIDS: As stated before, I have little or no experience to draw from regarding hybrid gulls.

THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED FROM EXTENSIVE NOTES MADE DURING NUMEROUS OBSERVATIONS OF THIS BIRD FROM MARCH 2 THROUGH MARCH 31, 1992.

OBSERVER MAKING THIS REPORT:

Jack Reddall - 4450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80111-1205

Jack Reddall

DATE: May 15, 1992

23 March 1992

23-92-81

Dear Joe -

I don't think that there is any reason to hedge and your gull may be certainly identified as a Glaucous-winged ... or nearly so (as he hedges!). It is certainly of the Glaucous-winged type (which includes only Glaucous-winged and Western Gulls) and the only characters that suggest there may be a "Western" ancestor in its lineage ~~are~~ are ① its sootiness especially in the lores and cheek and ② the dark-appearing, dorsal-surface of the rectrices (contrasting ~~B~~ dark tail). By March, these first-winter gulls should be overall paler than they are in their first fall.

If there is any Western Gull in there, it must be something like  $\frac{1}{8}$  or  $\frac{1}{16}$  or less. (I believe that GWGU and WEGU are demonstrably the same species with a South to North cline in darkness so a wild guess might be that your bird was fledged near Puget Sound where the northernmost *L. o. occidentalis* merge fluidly and thoroughly into *L. glaucescens*.) It has the Gestalt (or jizz, if you will) of these types of gulls in shape and especially the rather dumb, wildebeast look to the face.

Thus, since there is but a suspicion of "Western" gull genetic input and since it seems in all other regards to be a typical (but darkish for March) Glaucous-winged, that it be called simply that.

There are no characters to suggest that any other species (not Herring and certainly not "Thayers" or Glaucous) is involved. Though its plumage most closely resembles Thayers, its large size, hest and head/bill shape eliminate that species.

The bird, though certainly (mostly) a GWGU is clearly untypical in two ways. ① The two or three rectrices missing from the right side of the tail are not symmetrically molted and are the result of an accident or a mugging (perhaps by a sibling in the nest - the cause of some damaged feet and/or tarsi so many gulls show). This is likely the cause of the bird's presence in Colorado as many Vagrant birds have proved to have faulty rudders... ~~or~~ even if slight. Even if the bird's compass is correct, a missing feather from one side may cause the bird to pull to the other side. A few degrees on a long flight turns out <sup>to be</sup> ~~as~~ a many hundred mile mistake when fully protracted. The more missing rudder, the more radical the navigational error may be.

② The bill pattern and color is an ignema but should not be considered a factor in the bird's I.D. as a Glaucous-winged Gull. The pale bill (horn or bone yellow) is abnormal or aberrant. We do see first winter GWGU here on the California Coast occasionally with partly pale (usually grayish or whitish-horn) bills (maybe abnormal partial shedding of the black sheath) but typically, first-winter GWGU bills are 100% black from the nail right into the gape and feathers. That the bill appears yellow to me in your color slides is even more strange but since you say that is illusion, we needn't think more about it.

Thanks for letting me have a look at the pictures and I hope my comments are helpful. Please send me a reprint of your publication.

Best wishes,  
 Rich Stallcup  
 Box 36  
 Inverness, CA.  
 ( Ft. Russ. Bird Sanctuary ) 919.37

S. Could I  
 to a copy  
 the slide  
 owing your  
 rd with the  
 J.G.U.?  
 I do gull seminars  
 each winter and it  
 would be  
 good  
 addition....