

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTING

2003-78

Species: Kelp Gull

A Accepted

Date: September 17, 2003 Also Sept. 21, 2003.

Time seen: 1 to 3 p.m. Sept. 17; shorter period, not as close Sept. 21.

Locality: West shore of Jackson Lake, Jackson Lake State Park, Morgan County

Latilong: 40104

Optical equipment: 10x42 Swarovski & 8x40 Bausch & Lomb Elite; Swarovski 20-60 telescope.

Number of birds seen: One Sex: ? Plumage: Adult (?)

Light conditions: Excellent, with sun coming in from behind us at a 45 degree angle.

Distance from bird: From half a mile away (maybe only a quarter mile), from the Jackson Lake dam, we saw its blinding black back. We drove over to the Visitor Center, where we walked across to the edge of the lake. Eventually we got within 50 yards of the gull.

Weather at time of observation: Partly cloudy but sunny, and very very windy - 30-40 mph from NE. The wind hampered observation of some field marks.

Describe habitat: Edge of shore of receding reservoir.

Describe behavior: When we first saw the gull, it was resting in company with half a dozen Ring-billed Gulls. It spent the afternoon (from 1 to 3 p.m.) on the west side variously resting and feeding on dead fish stranded in shallow water near the water's edge. It moved close enough to other gulls that we could compare the size with Ring-billed and California. It spent quite a bit of time feeding on a couple of dead fish. When it did this, it often sprang up and flew a short distance, giving us the opportunity to observe its wings. It jumped up both to drive away other gulls and of its own volition.

Field marks observed: size, color, pattern, shape, bill, etc.:

General Impression: A gull larger than the other two species of gulls nearby (Ring-billed and California), with a vivid, striking black back and very white head.

Size: A bit bigger than California Gull, 1/4 to 1/3 bigger than Ring-billed

Legs: Pale yellow to greenish yellow or gray-green-yellow (brighter in certain light)

Mantle and wings: Very dark (blindingly black, it seemed, from a distance). Completely black all the way to wing tip. No white spots visible in the outer primaries. Inner half of trailing edge white. From underside, primaries dark.

Tail: White

Iris: Yellowish

Head: All white; no streaking

Bill: Large in proportion to the head; bright yellow with an orange spot; yellow much brighter and more vivid than the legs. We didn't notice the gonydeal angle, but it probably contributes to our impression of its large size.

Bird's call or song: At one point the gull called, but wind and distance muffled the sound. I recorded it as "cak cak cak." Posture as it called: alert, up and not bent over - as I remember (I didn't take notes at the time).

Field marks not seen:

Iris: we did not get a definitive look at the eye.

Bill: we did not notice the gonydeal angle that shows conspicuously in Steve Messick's photos.

Primary projection.

Width of white trailing edge.

Similar species:

Greater Black-backed: pink legs, bigger. Should have white spots in outer primaries

Lesser Black-backed: Should have white spot in outer primary; Back browner rather than vivid black; Legs bright yellow, not this pale greenish gray or light yellow; Head should have dark streaking. Smaller bill without gonydeal angle; same size as California Gull.

Slaty-backed: Back not as dark; pink legs; streaked head and back, streak through eye.

Prior experience: None.

Description from: Notes taken in field

Hugh E. Kingery

Urling C. Kingery

PO Box 584, Franktown CO 80116

2003-78

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

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

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CBRC FILE #: 2003-78

RESULTS:

Species: (Common Name) Kelp Gull

(Scientific Name) *Larus dominicanus*

Date(s) of occurrence: 18 Sep 03 (& again 20 Sep 03, 27 Sep 03)

Number of birds seen: 1

Sex: ?

Plumage: Alt III or IV molting to
Definitive Basic (per Leukering)

Exact location: Jackson Reservoir

County: Morgan

Nearest town: Orchard

Elevation: 4400'

Length of observation: Several Hours Total

Time(s) of observation: Approx. 7 am – early afternoon

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Chris Wood, Tony Leukering, Doug Faulkner, Glenn Walbeck

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): Bird found by Steve Messick and Hugh Kingery (17 Sep 03), Many Other
Observers

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: At times very good light

Optical equipment used: Kowa TSN 824 + Nikon Coolpix 4500 and Nikon D100 + 80-400 VR

Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): At closest about 80 meters

Was (Were) bird(s) photographed? Yes

If so, are you submitting photos? Yes

Who took the photograph(s)? Bill Schmoker

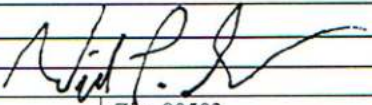
Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: Large eastern plains water storage reservoir

Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits: The bird was standing in a group of other gulls (mostly Ring-billed) when we first located it. Throughout the morning the bird was observed flying from place to place, standing on the muddy shore or in shallow water, and feeding on a carp carcass. It only loosely associated with other gulls, sometimes standing with or near them but often standing, feeding, or flying on its own.

DESCRIPTION – In short, a large, very dark mantled gull. The gull looks about Herring Gull sized when compared to nearby Ring-billed Gulls. As seen in the photos, the gull has yellow feet and legs (about the same shade as nearby Ring-billed Gulls.) The legs are relatively long, giving the gull a very tall appearance when standing on shore. The underparts, neck, and head are very clean white. The bill is orange-yellow, with a large bright red gonydeal spot. The bill is long and quite robust, with a somewhat pronounced gonydeal angle. I would say the bill length may be similar or a bit longer than a typical Herring Gull's bill, but it is much heavier looking. The gape appears to be yellow. The eye looks kind of small against the large head, similar to a Herring Gull. The iris appears to be pale gray, and a dark red orbital ring is visible. The mantle of this gull is very dark gray, only a "shade" or two lighter than the black primary tips. On the standing bird, a wide white tertial crescent is visible. The primary tips appear black, without any white spots. In the spread wings, flight feathers are seen in various stages of molt. The secondaries appear to have been recently completely replaced, with consistent length and coloration. The primaries are more inconsistent in length, with the outer few (3 or 4?) appearing to be unmolted and/or still growing in. From above, a wide white terminal band is visible throughout the secondaries. The inner 4 primaries also have wide white tips. The next two primaries appear to have minimal white tips. The outer primaries appear to be totally black (upon close photographic examination, what seems to be a small mirror in the outer left primary appears to actually be a gap in the feather.) There's also a little thin pale streaking in the leading edge of the upper wing (probably alula and primary coverts.) The underwing coverts are pale, but not quite as white as the bird's body. The undersides of the secondaries are a little lighter gray than the upper surface, with broad white tips. The inner primaries also appear kind of medium gray from underneath, with distinct white tips. The underside of the outer primaries are contrastingly dark, almost black. There is no white visible in the outer primaries from below. The tip of the wing looks unusually blunted because of the still-growing primaries. The upper and lower surfaces of the tail appear to be clean white.

Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted: n/a

SIMILAR SPECIES – Many large gulls are too light-colored for consideration. The addition of yellow legs also eliminates some contenders as well. Black-tailed Gull has yellow legs and a dark mantle, but not dark enough. Additionally, Black-tailed Gull has significant bill structure differences, a yellow iris, and a big black band on its tail, and is much smaller. Slaty-backed Gull is pretty dark, but has pink legs and streaking in the neck and head. Western Gull has pink legs, and an orange-yellow orbital ring. Great Black-backed Gull has pinkish legs and is much larger, and shows much more white in the primaries. Lesser Black-backed Gull can be pretty dark, but not as dark as this bird. Additionally, Lesser Black-backed Gull would be smaller, and have smudging on the neck and head. The bill on LBBG isn't as massive, and the iris color is yellow, not pale gray. Additionally, LBBG appear to be proportionately longer winged than this bird. Yellow-footed Gull shouldn't be as dark as this bird. Additionally, Yellow-footed Gulls should have yellow irises and yellow orbital rings, neither of which were observed in this bird. Additionally, the head profile doesn't fit the peaked shape of Yellow-footed Gull heads.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? This was my life bird. I've observed some of the candidates eliminated, but I have no direct experience with BTGU, SBGU, or YFGU.		
List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation): Sibley Guide to Birds, National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America, Seabirds of the World (The Complete Reference), and Seabirds, An Identification Guide. Additionally, photos of Kelp Gulls from S. Africa and S. America (provided by Angus Wilson and Harold Stiver) were used for comparison.		
This report was made from: Photos and notes taken during observation.		
Date and time of written report: 14 Jan 04		
Reporting observer: William P Schmoker	Signature: 	
Reporting observer's address: 3381 Larkspur Dr.		
City: Longmont	State: CO	Zip: 80503

Photos 18 Nov 03

Jackson Reservoir

(Additional photos at <http://schmoker.org/BirdPics/KEGU.html>)







2003-78

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

CBRC FILE #: 2003-78

RESULTS:

Species: (Common Name) Kelp Gull

(Scientific Name) *Larus dominicanus*

Date(s) of occurrence: 09/25/03 Jackson Res. (Morgan County), 10/19/03 Fossil Creek Res. (Larimer County), 10/26/03 Donath Res. (Larimer County)

Number of birds seen: One

Sex:

Plumage: Adult

Exact location: See dates of occurrence above.

County: Jackson & Larimer

Nearest town:

Elevation:

Length of observation: At Jackson Res. Approx. 5 minutes. At Fossil Creek Res. Approx. 20 minutes. At Donath Res. Approx. 20 minutes.

Time(s) of observation: Morning and afternoon depending on location.

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Tony Leukering, Bill Maynard

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): MOB

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position:

Optical equipment used: Leica Televid 77 scope with 20-60X zoom

Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): Variable. See photo.

Was (Were) bird(s) photographed? Yes.

If so, are you submitting photos? Yes. Pics\kelp_gull.jpg

Who took the photograph(s)? Me

Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: Large reservoirs

Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits:

DESCRIPTION -- This is the most important part of this report. Include in these details the overall size and shape of the bird and give as many plumage details as possible, even including those that you feel might not have relevance to the specific identification. Please fill out this portion even if photos are accompanying your report. **See photo.**

Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted:

SIMILAR SPECIES -- This is another critical part of your report. Please discuss how you eliminated similar species from consideration: **See photo.**

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I have seen Kelp Gulls in Antarctica prior to this bird.

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation): None.

This report was made from (check one) ☒ later from memory.

Date and time of written report: 03/18/2003

Reporting observer: Rachel Hopper

Signature: Rachel Hopper

Reporting observer's address: 1721 Cottonwood Pt. Dr.

City: Ft. Collins

State: CO

Zip: 80524

2003-78





2003-78

Kelp Gull doc.txt

From: antejos@juno.com
Sent: Tuesday, October 28, 2003 9:39 PM
To: GreatGrayOwl@aol.com
Subject: Kelp Gull doc

I observed a Kelp Gull at Donah Reservoir in Larimer County between 0900 and 1030 on Sunday October 26. It tasted like chicken but I think that it was southern fried gull. The yellow-green legs didn't have much meat but they sure was sweet. It tried to molt its plumage, which turned me to ignorant gloomage. Interestingly, before I skinned and barbecued the sucker, (actually the fish it was eating was a carp) I saw a red orbit and a reddish gape. In flight the bird had a dark leading edge to both underwings. I looked for, but did not see, a mirror on neither P9 nor P10 which was interesting. Some interesting feathers are now viewable on one of the photos and also in my feather collection. The DNA analysis pointed to Northern Hemisphere Kelp (rhymes with help) Gull.

Photos, courtesy of Bill Maynard 18645 Wethersfield Dr. Monument CO 80132 and his 3x optical zoom via a Canon G2 digital camera, and a Leica APO angled scope with zoom, zoomed out to ~30x.

Prior experience with this species in N.America - none.

Prior experience with this species in S. America - lots seen, none studied.

Billy Bob, Birdwatcher