

2002-215

CFO-ORC FILE # 2002-215

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☐ UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

rec'd. 1/26/03

Species: Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)**Date:** 11-12 September 2002**Number seen:** one**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** 1st-basic**Locality:** Standley Lake**Elevation:** about 5000'**Nearest town:** Westminster**County:** Jefferson**Time observed:** approx. 1820-1830hrs (11 Sept) and 0730-0745hrs (12 Sept)**Duration of observation:** a total of about 10 minutes both days combined**Description:**

On Sept. 11, I was birding Standley Lake looking for an Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) that had been reported the previous day and seen again that afternoon, when I came across a small bird in flight that I thought was a tern. This bird banked, showing a strongly patterned black M-shape across the upperwings. The M-pattern encompassed the outer 4-6 primaries to the "wrist", then diagonally across the upperwing to the tertials. The remainder of the upperwing was light gray; the underwing was white. I decided right then that this was not a tern and was, in fact, a very small gull. I watched it fly around a small island that had developed in the southern half of the lake on which lots of gulls were roosting. The small gull was constantly harassed by other gull species, particularly Franklin's (*L. pipixcan*) and Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*). The bird in question was decidedly smaller (about 1/2) than the Franklin's. At one point it landed on the water and was lost in the small wave action created by the wind. During the following day's observation, it was seen briefly foraging with a Forster's Tern (*S. forsteri*). The gull was noticeably smaller than the tern and had a different foraging style. While the tern would dive plunge, the gull would sweep down to the water to glean from the surface.

Characteristics noted were: extremely small size; strongly patterned M-shape across upperwings, otherwise light gray upperparts; dark gray crown patch; black ear spot; squared-off tail with a thin, black terminal band; small, black bill; and white underparts.

Separation from similar species:

Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) - by smaller size and lack of bold white triangle on upperwing.

Bonaparte's Gull (*L. philadelphia*) - by smaller size; bolder, thicker M-shape to upperwings; lack of white wedge shape to outer wing; and presence of dark gray crown patch.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): I heard none.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have only seen this species twice before, both in Colorado - a 1st-basic bird in Fall 1997 at Lower Latham, Weld, and an adult at Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo, in Winter 1999-2000.

Light conditions: Sept. 11 - setting sun directly ahead, heavily overcast; Sept. 12 - partially cloudy with sun low and behind me.

Optical equipment used: Kowa scope 20x60 zoom

Distance, and how estimated: Sept. 11 - estimated closest distance at ~600 meters; Sept. 12 - the bird flew by at about 100 meters away, but the majority of the observation was made at ~800 meters or greater.

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Sept. 11 - none; Sept. 12 - Larry Semo

Other observers who saw the bird independently: Nick Komar, Loch Kilpatrick, Eric Zorawicz, Ira Sanders

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: Tony Leukering. I called to inform him of the interesting gull and he confirmed my suspicion that it was a Little Gull based on the description given over the phone.

b) after observation: National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America, 3rd ed.

Gulls: a guide to identification. P.J. Grant

National Audubon Society The Sibley Guide to Birds.

I needed to brush up on immature gull identification, so I took this opportunity to do so; however, identification was made prior to consulting these resources.

Reporting observer: Doug Faulkner

Signature:

Doug Faulkner

Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: This report was written on 14 September 2002 from memory.