

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

UNUSUAL RECORD

|X|

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

Species: Little Gull Larus minutus
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): October 15, 1993Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: JuvenileLocality: Appx. 240 m upstream on South Platte River from E. 74th Ave bridge (C 224) Elevation: 1515 mNearest town: Denver or Thornton County: AdamsTime(s) observed: 0945-1010 Daylight S. Time 45°, calmDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 25 minutes

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

none

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

none

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

Partly cloudy. Sighting in full sun, all sides of bird illuminated. Saw from my right side and from behind, over my shoulder; backlit as bird made turn to land on water.Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Swarovski 8x56 BinocDistance, and how measured: Varied from 20 m to 70 m, est.If photographed, type of equipment and film: —Who else photographed the bird? —

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

see attached

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:

see attached

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

none

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

Swimming and feeding on surface of the South Platte River, approx. 1 mile downstream from the Denver Wastewater Treatment Plant. Good river flow. River width 40-50 meters. Sandbars, some bare, some vegetated nearby. Willows, cottonwoods & weedy areas on shore

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

see attached

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? 1st sighting of Little Gull; Have seen 2, 1a Sabine's last 3 yrs.; have seen many Franklin's & Bonaparte's Gulls in Idaho, Colo. & Tx; have never seen Ross' Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake or Common Black-headed gull.

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

- a) at time of observation: "National Geo: Field Guide to Birds of N. Am."; Peterson's "Western Birds" guide to aid in identification.
- b) after observation: "Audubon Encyclopedia of N. Am. Birds"; Gulls: a guide (Grant); "Audubon Soc. Master Guide to Birding, Vol 2." used to compare similar species. Confirmed my initial ID.

This report was written from reports made during note/drawings research X after observation X from memory _____

Date and time report was written: October 17, 1993

Reporting observer: KARLEEN SCHOFIELD Signature: Karleen Schofield

Address: 33 Yates Street, Denver, Co. 80219

(303) 936-8661

Return to:
Bill Prather
C.F.O. Official Records Committee
13810 WCR 1
Longmont, Colorado 80504

Little Gull (L.G.)

Drawings + Additional notes to CFO form ^{sighting} (Oct. 15, 1993)

Bird was seen floating / swimming with the current down middle of So. Platte River among 40-50 winter + 1st winter Franklin's Gulls. all actively feeding by making stabbing motions at material floating on surface of the water, "phalarope style."

As birds floated past me, approx 20-25 m away, one-by-one they would fly upstream approx. 60 m, land on the water, float / swim downstream, feeding all the while. ^{This was repeated 7-8 times while I was watching.} The bird seemed very comfortable in the company of the Franklin's Gulls. No aggressive actions noted. At least 100 gulls (Franklin's, Calif., Ring-billed and 1 Herring) were a short distance downstream, resting on an open sand bar, not participating in the feeding activity at this time.

L.G. was proportionately smaller by 2-3" than Franklin's Gulls in immediate vicinity. Dainty size, compact shape, small white head with small, slender, pointed solid black bill; dark eye, blackish ear spot slightly larger than eye. Brownish-black solid crown + upper nape. Lower nape whitish or light gray. Face, forehead, chin, throat + underparts white. Most of mantle, scapulars, back, primary coverts + outer primaries were dark brown / blackish; feather edges on upperparts appeared buffy, presenting a scalloped pattern. A broad, blackish-brown "collar" extended

from mantle to breast sides passing in front of shoulder. Feet and legs, which dangled each time the gull landed on the water, were a bright reddish orange.

A very small area of uppermost mantle appeared as a uniform medium gray, as though a 1st winter molt was just beginning. When floating, the bird showed wings extending beyond a white tail with a narrow solid black terminal band. Tail, in flight, was square cut; rump was white.

The upper surface of the wings was marked with a striking black  pattern (see drawing) in flight. Innermost coverts gray; trailing edges of wings were white except for black primary tips. Underwings were whitish - no pattern discernible. Flight pattern straight and rhythmic, not erratic in any way. Length of wings appeared proportionate to body size, not unusually long. Wings were briefly held upright when alighting on the water.

I left at 10:10 to phone Bill Brockner, Evergreen and Al Hay, Arvada, to discuss sighting. Both opined that the bird, based on my observations, "probably was" a Little Gull.

Al + Marlene Eggerling met me shortly after noon to confirm I.D., but bird was gone. An hour of searching proved unsuccessful.

Little Gull (L.G.) cont.

Similar species I eliminated:

Juvenile Ross' Gull: nearly identical to L.G. but

- * Has markedly wedge-shaped tail with central pair of feathers, more elongated than the rest, with broad, black tips.

- * Legs dull brown, dull flesh or dull red, not orange

- * Usually larger in size than L.G.

- * Bill stubbier.

Juvenile Franklin's Gull:

- * Head has black half-hood, black feet + legs

- * Larger body size; lacks black ~~on~~ pattern on ^{upper} wings.

Juvenile Sabine's Gull: * Has forked tail, not square

- * Larger body size

- * Gray-brown upperparts, not blackish-brown

- * Extensive gray-brown on head and breast sides

- * Gray legs instead of orange.

- * Lacks black crown + black ~~on~~ pattern on ^{upper} wings.

Juvenile Bonaparte's Gull: * Lacks black crown

- * Mantle, back + scapulars are brownish not blackish

- * Trailing edges of wings are black, not white as in L.G.

- * Larger body size; legs flesh colored, not orange.

Juvenile Black-Legged Kittiwake: * Lacks black crown

- * Mantle, back + scapulars gray, not blackish

- * Larger body size; legs black; slightly forked tail

Juvenile Common Black-headed Gull:

- * Bill pale with black tip, not solid black

- * Larger body size

- * Trailing wing edges black

- * Lacks black crown

23-93-94

