

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____

UNUSUAL RECORD X

ACCEPT 7-0

Rcd 1/5/00 wpl

Species: Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)**Date:** 8 November 1998**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Basic I**Locality:** Barr Lake**Elevation:** about 5000'**Nearest town:** Brighton**County:** Adams**Time observed:** about 15:15 - 15:20 MDT**Duration of observation:** about five minutes

Description: While scoping through some Franklin's Gulls that were foraging over Barr Lake, I found a smaller gull with a very strong "M" pattern (or "W" pattern, depending on your point of view) and immediately thought "Little Gull." I watched it for a while to make sure that it wasn't an aberrant, heavily-marked Bonaparte's Gull.

It was a very small gull, much smaller than the Franklin's (FRGU) near it, that was foraging as most small gulls do, by flying around over the water's surface and dropping down to the surface to pick up tasty morsels. The head was white with a dark smudge on the crown and a dark post-ocular spot. The bill was petite and the eyes were dark. The back was a light gray, noticeably paler than those of the FRGUs. The rump and tail were white and the tail had a distinct black band that, at the long distance, looked as if it were a terminal band. Though the distance precluded being confident of the tail shape, the shape of the black tail band (cutting across virtually the whole tail and being only slightly thicker in the middle than on the ends) is an important feature that I noticed. The underparts were entirely white. I did not note the leg color.

In flight from above, the wings were bi-colored gray and black. Each wing was basically gray with a black strip extending unbroken from the tertials through the median secondary coverts and the primary coverts to the outer primaries. The secondaries were somewhat paler than the gray of the rest of the wing and had a vague secondary bar. From below, the wings were entirely white except for small black tips to the primaries and a vague dark secondary bar.

Similar species eliminated: Black-headed (BHGU), Bonaparte's gulls (BOGU), and Ross's Gull (ROGU) and Black-legged Kittiwake (BLKI) are the other species in which youngsters have M patterns in Juvenile/First Basic. Thus, these are the species that need to be considered. All young BLKIs are readily eliminated by size (BLKI is larger than FRGU) and juveniles are also easily eliminated as they have black nuchal collars. BHGU is ruled out by size (BHGU is about the size of FRGU), wing pattern (BHGU has white middle primaries and the "M" is not continuous, being broken by pale primary coverts), and the dark tertials of this bird. BOGU is eliminated on wing pattern (M is not continuous on most individuals), the presence of a distinct crown patch (BOGUs lack this feature), and all BOGUs have obvious dark secondary bars, which the bird in question did not have. ROGU is most similar to the bird in question, but its wing pattern is much paler with the secondaries being white, not just pale gray. ROGU also does not have a dark crown patch in First Basic and its tail band is shorter and with an obviously wider center.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): No vocalizations heard.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen >30 Little Gulls, mostly at Niagara Falls, but also in MI, NY, NJ, and two previously in CO. I have seen >250,000 Bonaparte's Gulls (mostly on or near the Great Lakes), and about eight Black-headed Gulls. I have not seen Ross's Gull.

Light conditions: sky was overcast

Optical equipment used: Kowa 30x

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at 175 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Sue Bonfield

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none

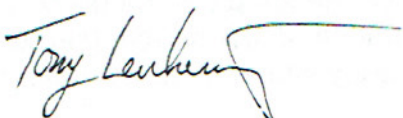
If photographed, type of equipment and film: not photographed

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

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: Grant, to confirm wing pattern differences noted - it did not influence my identification

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature: 

Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Picadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: 1 December 1999 from notes written four hours after the sighting