

23-89-21

Species: Great Black-backed Gull.
(Vernacular name)

Larus marinus
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 22 April 1989 Time Bird Seen: ~11:20 am to 11:30 a.m.

Locality: Blue Lake (Adobe Creek Reservoir)
~10 miles north of Las Animas, Colo.
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Nikon 9x30 binos; KOWA 20-60x Scope.

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: -

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: - Plumage: 1st winter

Light conditions: Diffuse sunlight; high clouds but sun from left & rear.

Distance from bird, and how measured: As close as approx 75 yds (estim.) also in flight to limits of vision.

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

Bird was perched on sandy/muddy edge of water; then when I got too close it flew and landed, floating on water. Then got up & flew to nearly out of sight to island. Flight was into wind, heavy flaps, powerful & very strong. Bird looked huge and "macho" - looked much bigger than flying Double-crested Cormorant that it passed in flight.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Fresh water, plains reservoir

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

None

Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. When first seen, this bird was perched on sand with 2 Herring Gulls (1st year) and 3 adult Calif. Gulls. This bird was basically a two-toned, 1st year gull, with whitish head & neck and dark gray body and white rump. Head & neck nearly white w/ grayish speckling. Back & wings mottled heavily gray & white, undersides mottled grayish-tan, paler than upperparts & not as checkered. In flight, head & foreparts white; rump and uppertail nearly white; back of tail blackish, contrasting with whiter uppertail & rump. Mantle checkered dark gray/white. Wings dark, more blackish distally, on primaries and with black patch at upper bend of wing (wrist). Marked black secondaries (black trailing edge to inner wing). Bill all black. Eye black. Legs pale pink. Bill very large, powerful, deep & straight. Long sloping forehead & long underchin gives more elongated, powerful profile than other gulls present. Eye set back on face. Larger than Herring Gulls nearly.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery--
i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

Not heard.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Huge size eliminate most other gulls.

Herring = Smaller; smaller bill & gentler profile. Has darker rump; less 2-toned.

Lesser B-backed = is smaller, much less 2-toned; much less powerful & small.

Glaucous = white; larger; 2-toned bill.

Why was this a Great Black-backed Gull = huge size ("eagle-like"); Large deep, powerful black bill; Two-toned look w/ white rump. Checkered appearance.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

I've seen most large, N. Am. Gulls in 1st year pl., including several 1st winter G-B-b. Gulls in Montauk, N. Y. in winter 1987.

This report was written from notes made during X after ___ observation; from memory ___.

NAME (print): MARK JANOS

Mailing address: 1 CACTUS DR. LA JUNTA CO 81030

Signature: Mark Janos

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery
869 Milwaukee Street
Denver, Colorado 80206