

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*)

Location: Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado

Date: October 1; November 25, 26, 1993

Setting:

I think that this is the same bird that Brandon Percival and I discovered at the south marina at Pueblo Res. on March 14, 1993. It has been seen off and on through the late summer and fall of 1993 at Pueblo Reservoir. That bird, which was in first winter plumage, is now in 2nd summer plumage. I observed it this fall at both close (50 yards) and long range at a variety of locations on Pueblo Reservoir.

Description:

This is a second summer bird. It was about 30" long, appearing larger than, and much bulkier than, adjacent Herring Gulls. It has a massive bill. Overall, this bird is clearly the biggest gull on the lake. It has a nearly white head and body with faint grayish mottling, especially on the sides of the breast and head. The back is very dark gray. The folded wing coverts are dark gray and white with white fringes. The black wing tips extend well beyond the black-tipped tail. In flight the mantle and wings are a uniform, very dark gray that grades into the unmarked black primaries. The bill is heavy, hooked and strongly two-toned, being grayish-yellow at the base and black at the tip. In flight the bird has a two-toned tail and rump: whitish rump and base to the tail with a broad black band at the end of the tail. The legs are dull pink and the eyes are yellow.

Similar Species:

The large size, in direct comparison with Herring Gull rules out most gulls. This bird was larger and bigger-billed than the Herring Gull (also see other points in description above). California Gull is smaller, much lighter than this bird. Glaucous and Thayer's gulls would never have this dark a back. Slaty-backed Gull would be much lighter overall. Lesser Black-backed Gull is smaller, has less bulky bill. Western and Yellow-footed gulls would show lighter gray feathers in back and lack the black tail band.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Great Black-backed, Western, Yellow-footed and Herring gulls. I have seen two Great Black-backed Gulls in Colorado.

This report was prepared from notes made at the time of observation.

Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001