

1997-39

ACCEPTED 7-0

PHOTOS

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*)Location: Nee Noshe Reservoir, Eads, Kiowa County, ColoradoDate: April 26; May 2; July 16, 1997Setting:

This individual reliably hung out on the borders of Nee Noshe Reservoir, a large shallow plains reservoir north of Lamar. It could usually pretty easily be found standing at the edges and sometimes was seen in flight over the lake. On April 26 I observed the bird from 3:30-4:00 p.m. from as close as 75 yards. It mainly stood at the edge but I also observed it in short flights. It was in direct comparison with Ring-billed and California Gulls.

Description:

This was a first summer bird. It was about 30" long, towering over adjacent Ring-billed Gulls. It had a massive look, with a huge, flat, low head with a flat crown. It had a very large, long, thick bill. Overall, this bird was easily the biggest gull on the lake. The Ring-billed Gulls stood only as high as its shoulder. The head, neck, underparts, rump and upper tail were mainly white (as noted below). There was a smudgy dusky patch around and behind the eye. There were fine blackish streaks and speckles on the sides of the otherwise white head, flanks and breast. The back and folded wings were darker in general, being white and checkered coarsely and heavily with black. The spread wing was black on the outer primaries, primary coverts and secondaries. The terminal 1-2" tail band was black. The upper tail was white with subtle black barring in good views. The legs were dull pink and very long and heavy. The bill was very thick and deep with a strong gonydeal angle; it was black terminally and gradually paler at the base. I did not note the eye color.

Similar Species:

The large size, in direct comparison with Ring-billed Gull rules out most gulls. This bird was larger and bigger-billed than a 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 several Great Black-backed Gulls in Colorado.

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

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