

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD _____

rec'd 12/8/01

Species: Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*)**Date:** 2 November & 8 December 2001
Basic**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** 4th**Locality:** Windsor Res.**Elevation:** about 5000'**Nearest town:** Severance**County:** Weld**Time observed:** about 07:30 - 07:55 MST (2 Nov); ~11:20 - 11:24 MST (8 Dec)**Duration of observation:** about 3 minutes in this period

Description: This Lesser Black-backed Gull was first found by Rachel Hopper and Joe Fontaine on 1 November and Chris Wood, Brian Gibbons, and I chased it on the 2nd and found it without much trouble and got to see it standing and in flight. On 8 December, after no reports of the bird for a month, I refound it after it and ~15 other gulls were kicked up off the ice by an immature Bald Eagle (BAEA). On the latter date, I got Larry Semo and Mark Hopey on the bird and we all watched it being chased by the immie BAEA! The eagle came close to it, but eventually gave up. On the latter date, I only saw it in flight. Due to the extreme similarity of the birds on the two dates and the rarity of the species, I feel that the sightings involved the same individual.

The bird was a large, white-headed gull, smaller than nearby HERGs and much larger than nearby Ring-billed Gulls (RBGU). The bird's white head was extensively streaked with dark brown. The eyes were pale. The bill was yellow and had a large, red gonydeal spot and possibly a dark smudge near the gonydeal angle (though distance precluded being very precise about the bill pattern). The mantle was a couple shades darker gray than that of the nearby Californias (CAGUs) and there was a strong contrast from mantle color to wingtip color. The wings were long, seeming longer and thinner than nearby flying HERGs. The wingtips were extensively black, much more so than on the nearby HERGs. The white trailing edge to the wing was well defined. The outer primaries did not have white tips or mirrors. At one point on 8 Dec, I thought that I saw a small mirror on P10, though I'm not at all sure, due to the long distance. The underparts were all white, other than some pale brown streaking on the neck. The legs were yellow.

Similar species eliminated: CAGU eliminated by size and mantle color. HERG (*smithsonianus*) ruled out by mantle color and leg color. Other, darker forms of HERG ruled out by size (they should be larger) and wingtip pattern. Slaty-backed Gull (SBGU) eliminated by wing pattern (number of mirrors and color of secondaries, the visible parts of which should be mostly white), mantle color (the bird was not virtually black-backed), and leg color. Kelp Gull (KEGU) ruled out by bill (size and shape) and by mantle color. Great Black-backed Gull eliminated by size, leg color, and by upperparts color and pattern.

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 >90 *graellsii* LBBGs, bazillions of *smithsonianus* HERGs, >125 *vegae* HERGs, 10s of 1000s of GBBGs, 10s of 1000s of CAGUs, and >75 SBGUs. I have not seen any other of the darker, Asian HERGs, nor have I seen KEGU.

Light conditions: sun behind me on both days

Optical equipment used: Leica 20-60x, Leica 32x, and Swarovski 8.5x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at about 150 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Brian Gibbons, Chris Wood, Larry Semo, Mark Hopey

Other observers who saw the bird independently: Rachel Hopper, Joe Fontaine (and others?)

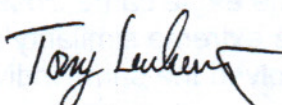
If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph the bird.

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

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature: 

Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: Written on 8 December 2001 (in early evening) from memory