

A

23-85-1

COLD. FIELD ORNITH. - SIGHT RECORD

Species: MEW GULL (*Larus canus*)

One (1) - first winter plumage

Date: January 29, 1985

Location: Cherry Creek Reservoir, Denver, CO

Time observed: 3:50 to 4:00 P.M.

Other observers: Pete Moulton; seen two days earlier by Wade Leitner and Jack Reddall.

Light conditions: Bright overcast; sun low in sky; generally looking southwest to northwest but sun did not pose a problem in getting a clear view.

Optical equipment: Bush; Lomb spotting scope (15-60x) set at 25x. Swift 8.5 x 44 binoculars.

Distance: When sitting on ice, approx. 100 yds; when gliding overhead as close as 30 ft.

General description: This gull was seen sitting on the ice at the edge of a small area of open water in the company of approx. 100 adults and two 1st winter Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), a few adult Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and five 1st yr. Thayer's Gulls (*Larus thayeri*).

It was noticeably different from the Ring-billed Gulls because it was overall darker and smaller (about $\frac{3}{4}$ -plus the size of the majority of Ring-billed) and had a smaller, different shaped bill.

Shape and size: Overall shape similar to Ring-billed Gulls but since it was smaller in body and bill size, seemed daintier.

Plumage: Head was lightest part of bird at rest— a mottled dirty white. Back was medium gray, darker than that of imm. Ring-billed. In flight rump appeared to be same mottled dirty white of head. Tail^(upper and lower) was dark brown, darkest at end, lightening at base, but did not get the impression of a distinct terminal band. At rest, wing was medium brown, dark brown on primaries. In flight upper wing did not show as much contrast as that of imm. Ring-billed: mostly medium grayish-brown; dark brown primaries, leading and trailing edge. Breast and belly were light brown, slightly mottled with white on upper breast. Undertail coverts were dirty white. Underwing smooth medium brown with dark brown primaries and brown line running from wrist diagonally to body. (Same line on upper wing only less distinct. Lighter-colored wedge between leading primaries and secondaries. Bill was noticeably smaller (narrower and shorter) than all Ring-billed observed; black at tip, lightening to horn color at base (not as distinctly marked as field guides show).

Flight: Though seen in flight only briefly and at that mostly gliding and banking, it did seem to be more agile than the Ring-billed Gull with a slightly quicker wing beat. Did not get the impression that its flight was buoyant like that of a Kittiwake.

I had not seen this species before. Heard about its arrival at Cherry Creek Res. through the bird-watcher grapevine. Consulted field guides before I went there so I had some preconceived ideas of what to look for. Used Audubon Master Guides and Nat. Geographic Birds of No. Am. However, this report is composed primarily from notes taken immediately after observation.

Judy Ward
9224 Baseline Rd.
Lafayette, CO 80026
666-8985