

23-92-9

A

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

MEW GULLLarus canus brachyrinchusLocation: Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo; Pueblo County, ColoradoDate: November 29 and December 6, 1992Setting:

I found the bird on the 29th while looking through about 1400 assorted gulls on the tire breakwater at the south marina at Pueblo Reservoir. The Mew Gull was in juvenile plumage, showing no evidence of molting into 1st winter plumage. Therefore this gull was quite distinctive and stood out as a small dark island in a sea of otherwise (mostly) white backs. The few 1st winter Herring and California gulls also present gave a good contrast in size, structure and color. I watched the bird through my scope for only a few seconds on the 29th before it flew. On December 6th it was much more cooperative and I observed it for about 10 minutes perched in the front tier of gulls. When it flew, it lifted up into a strong wind and held relatively motionless. I watched it hanging in the breeze on outstretched wings in my scope for several seconds. I watched it on both occasions from 75-250 yards distance in excellent light. Its association with so many Ring-billed Gulls gave me excellent side-by-side comparisons.

Description:

In direct comparison with Ring-billed Gulls, this bird was barely smaller, shorter-legged and did not stand as tall. It had a smaller, rounder head and its overall shape was more attenuated, with wings that extended about 1-1/2" beyond the tail (rather than 1" in the R-b Gull). The bird was overall grey-brown and finely mottled, like a tiny 1st year Herring Gull. The bill was much smaller, less stout and shorter than the Ring-billed Gull. The bill was pink with a black tip (distal third). The upperparts were a medium, even brown, finely mottled. The lower face and throat were whiter. The breast, belly and undertail were an even, medium-brown in color, vaguely barred on the undertail. The back was brown. In flight, the darkest part of the wing from above was the outer primaries, primary coverts and bend of wing, which were nearly black. They blended evenly into the medium brown secondary coverts and the mantle. The secondaries were darker, blackish, and showed as a dark line on the inner part of the trailing edge of the wing. The tail was one color, dark blackish brown, not banded. The rump was white, finely barred with blackish-brown and showed as a paler area against the darker mantle and tail, but was not white or whitish. The legs and feet were dull pink.

Similar Species:

The size (Ring-billed Gull or smaller) rule out all larger Larus. The black-headed gulls have black or red legs, white rumps and banded tails. Ring-billed Gull in juvenile plumage is overall lighter, with a white belly. It has a white tail with a black terminal band and whitish rump; white and black upper wing, and black (usually) bill. The direct comparison on size, shape and structural characters of this individual made identification fairly straight forward.

Experience with Species:

I have seen most Larus gulls in north America. I have seen many Mew Gulls (brachyrinchus) on the west coast, including in March of 1992 in Seattle, Washington. I saw single Mew Gulls in Pueblo in March and September 1990, including a juvenile bird.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

