

Species: Ross' Gull
(Vernacular name)Rhodostethia rosea
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 4-28-83 10:00-11:00 AM 5-8-83 8:45-10:00 AM 5-9-83 10-12 AM 5-5-83 1 PM
4-29-83 9:30-10:30 AM 5-2-83 8-10 AM Time Bird Seen: 5-4-83 11 AM 5-6-83 9-11 AMLocality: Jumbo Reservoir Logan + Sedgewick Cos, Colo.

Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Leitz 7x42If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: Nikon Camera T 400mm Sparatone LensNumber of birds seen: 1 Sex: _____ Plumage: 1st winterLight conditions: Sunlight, overcastDistance from bird, and how measured: observed several times at 25-50 ftDescribe the bird's overall behavior: Most of time sat in water and picked at foam. Preferred places where waves crashed against dam or rocks and made lots of foam. Also flew with Bonaparte's Gulls + picked at waves sometimes landing briefly + taking off again.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Surface of Lake usually near shore + in air above Lake.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

Inez Prather + I found bird on 4-28-83 she observed it 4-28 AM + PM 4-29, 5-2, 5-5, + 5-7 AM last sighting I know of John Prather saw bird several times first on 4-28-83 5 PM

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

A small grey & black gull. Bill very small & all black head generally very light grey - a very white tuft of feathers around bill. Black area in front of eye giving "black eye" look. Some darker grey on top of head & heavy grey & black mottling on back of neck coming around base of neck to touch ^{upper} sides of breast. A indistinct auricular spot. Back light grey with black markings at top of rump. Rump white. Tail wedge shaped with white with middle 2 or 3 feathers tipped in black - Wings long & pointed with distinct black Carpal bar grey in front white in back - white triangles very obvious when flying - underwing light blue-grey Feet & legs Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery -- "dirty" pink i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

None heard

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

No other gull has wedge shaped tail. Bill very delicate - much ~~more~~ ^{smaller} when seen with immature Bonaparte's gulls. Wing pattern with black & white contrast not as distinct as immature Sabines but much more so. ^{Sabines} Black legged Kittiwake or Little gull. Light back unlike ~~Black legged Kittiwake~~ or Little gull. Pink legs unlike black-legged Kittiwake.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

First sighting of Ross' Gull
I've seen Sabines gulls 4 times p Bonaparte's many times, never seen Little gull or black-legged Kittiwake.

This report was written from notes made during X after X observation; from memory .

NAME (print): Bill Prather

Mailing address: Box 486 Fleming, Colo 80728

Signature: Bill Prather

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery
869 Milwaukee Street
Denver, Colorado 80206

N-83-32
CFO-ORC FILE # 83-83-32

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

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UNUSUAL RECORD

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Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Ross' Gull Rhodostethia rosea
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)

Date(s): 1 May 1983

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: unknown Plumage: immature

Locality: Jumbo (= Julesburg) Reservoir Elevation: ~ 3700'

Nearest town: Crook County: Logan-Sedgwick

Time(s) observed: 0811-0920

Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): continuously for 1 1/4 hour

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

Hugh Kingery
Kate Kittleman
Richard Bunn
Judy Ward
Doug Ward
Bill Prather

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers)

Steve and Diane Larson
Barry Knapp
Bill Brockner
Thompson Marsh
Warren Finch
Kathy Hawkins

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):
sky overcast

Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 10 x 50 Bushnell custom binoculars, 15-60X Zoom Bushnell Telescope

Distance, and how measured: estimated distances 20-50'

If photographed, type of equipment and film: _____

Who else photographed the bird? Doug Ward, others (names not known to me), Steve Larson

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

Sitting on water surface with rather violent waves, occasionally flying up and over an incoming wave that was especially high, and also sometimes flying along dam parallel to it. Generally observed on water surface 10-15' from the dam. Picking food items from the surface of the water while sitting. Not associating closely with other larids, although there were 1 Bonaparte's Gull and 3-4 Forster's Terns in the area part of the time.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observe in the field:

Size and shape: small gull, with small bill and long wings, and wedge-shaped tail. In general, reminiscent of the size and shape of a Bonaparte's Gull.

Head and neck: crown white with pale gray in center; face white; nape grayish with grayish-black cloudy marbling extending to the side of the neck and upper breast; throat, foreneck white.

Breast and belly: white, with slight buffy-peach on breast, and a few smudgy grayish blotches on side of upper breast.

Description (continued):

Legs: pinkish-yellow, although it looked as if there might have been dusty in some parts as well.

Back: pearl gray, unmarked except at junction with rump, where there was a solid blackish bar and 2-3 rows of inconspicuous dark barring anterior to solid bar.

Rump: white.

Tail: white, with black terminal band widest in center; wedge-shaped, best seen as bird banked in flight or observed from behind as it landed on the water.

Folded wings: mostly dark brown (blackier toward front), with narrow white stripe posterior to it, and then a black area on wing-tips.

Upper wings in flight: wedge of gray on shoulder, widest at body and narrowing toward bend of wing, mostly solid brown-black band from body across coverts to outer primaries; white triangle on inner primaries and secondaries; black border on trailing edge of wing on primaries (and secondaries).

Underwings in flight: medium-gray, with white triangle corresponding to white triangle on upper surface, demarcation between gray and white not sharp.

Eye: black, with dark smudgy area circling eyes, making them appear rather large.

Bill: short, slight, black

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

None

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

Plains irrigation reservoir.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Bonaparte's Gull - has ear spot, lighter appearing wings, no bar on lower back, rounded tail, lighter (whiter) underwings

Little Gull - is much smaller, less white on upper wing, has dark cap, ear mark, barred back, tail not wedge-shaped

Black-legged Kittiwake - somewhat larger, less white on wing, has dark band on nape and dark auricular spot, tail not wedge-shaped

Sabine's Gull - back and shoulders same color, so wing pattern somewhat different, back and nape, crown concolored, tail forked rather than wedge-shaped.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

None with Ross' Gull; have seen many Bonaparte's Gull in immature plumage, several Black-legged Kittiwakes and 1 Little Gull in immature plumage, and several Sabine's Gulls in immature plumage.

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

a) at time of observation: None

b) after observation: standard U.S. and European field guides

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation from memory
Date and time report was written: May 2, 1983

Reporting observer: Robert Andrews Signature: Robert Andrews

Address: 1390 So. Ivy Way, Denver, Colorado 80224

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

Return to:

CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

Ross' Gull - Rhodostethia rosea (continued)

1 May 1983 (continued)

Written description (continued)

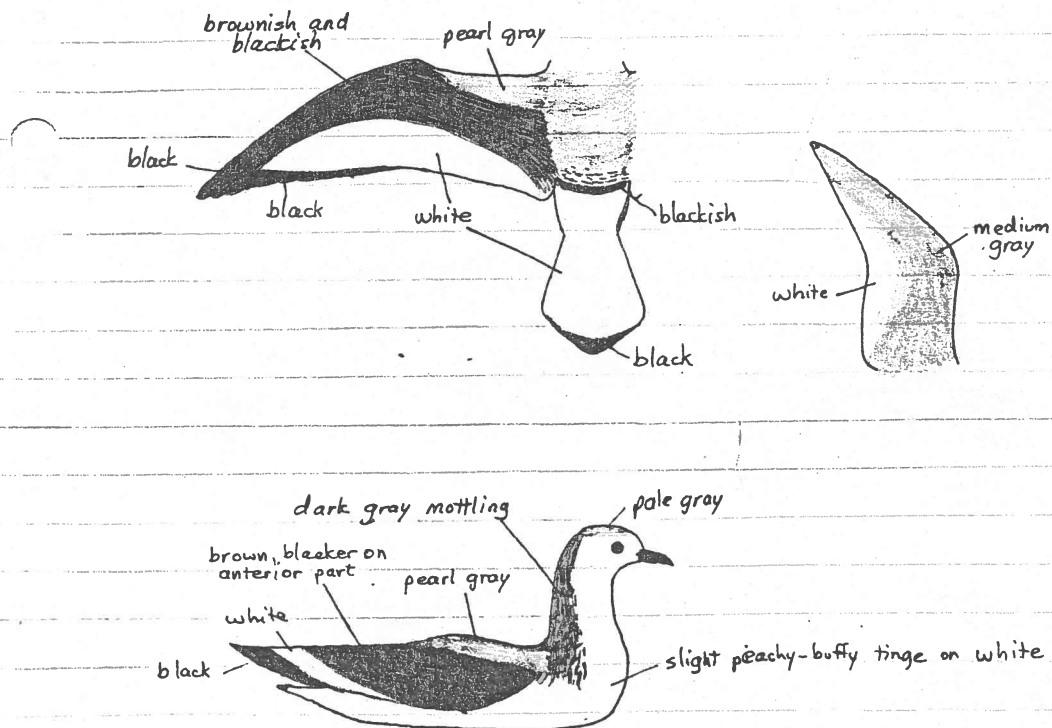
Eye: black; appeared large due to black smudge around eye.

Bill: short, slight, black.

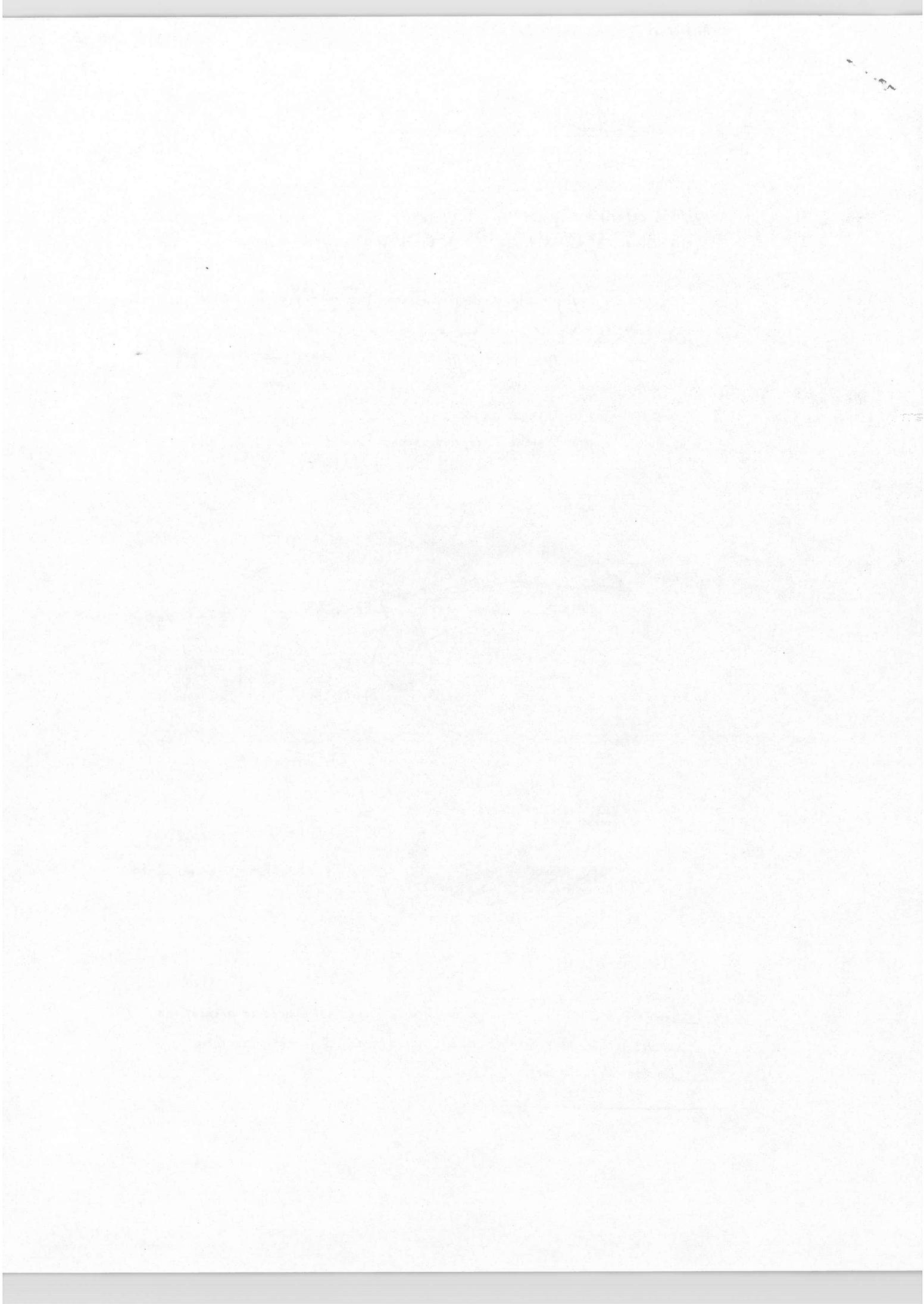
Legs: pinkish-yellow, although it appeared as if there was some dusky as well.

Overall, the pale gray back, striking pattern of the folded wings and the gray "hood" or "shawl" on the nape and neck gave the sitting bird a very distinctive appearance.

The following are sketches prepared from field sketches:



Note: illustrations are intended to show pattern, not shape or proportions except in the most general sense (small head, slight bill, long wings, wedge-shaped tail).



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23-83-32

Immature Ross' Gull in Colorado

An immature-plumaged Ross' Gull was observed and photographed at Jumbo Reservoir, Sedgwick/Logan Counties, Colorado, from 28 April to 7 May 1983. The bird was discovered and identified by Bill and Inez Praether of Fleming, Colo. on Thursday 28 April, in the company of Bonaparte's Gulls. Mr. Praether reports that these were the first Bonaparte's Gulls of 1983 at Jumbo Res., and that no gulls were seen there on Tuesday 26 April. No one was in the field on Wednesday 27 April. Thus it seems likely that the Ross' Gull and the Bonaparte's Gulls arrived together sometime between Tuesday afternoon 26 April and Thursday morning 28 April. The weather during this period (at least through 1 May) was inclement. On Saturday 30 April the temperature was in the low 40's (F.), the sky was heavily overcast and there was intermittent fog, drizzle, and rain, with a NE wind of up to 20 mph.

Many Colorado birders made the long drive out onto the prairie to see this rare arctic gull. Observers included Bob Andrews, Bill Brockner, Richard Bunn, Charles Chase, Kevin Cook, Jeanne & Larry Halsey, Hugh Kingery, Barry Knapp, Diane & Steve Larson, Thompson Marsh, Mike Middleton, Jack Reddall, John Vanderpoel, Doug & Judy Ward, and Betsy Webb. Several people obtained good photographs on Sunday morning, 1 May, when the bird stayed very close to the concrete dam on the south side of the reservoir for extended periods of time. The photographs reproduced here were taken by Mike Middleton on Kodachrome 64 with a 200 mm lens.

There are only three previous documented occurrences of the Ross' Gull in sub-arctic North America: an immature in November 1966 at Victoria, B. C. (Roberson, Rare Birds of the West Coast, p. 206), an adult from March to May 1975 at Newburyport, Mass. (AB 29, 643-646), and an adult at Chicago, Ill. in November 1978 (AB 33, 140-142). There are sight records from May 1957 at Pt. Pelee, Ont. (James et al, Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario, p. 27) and April 1981 at Newburyport, Mass. (Bird Observer of Eastern Mass 9, 134-135; AB 35, 802).

Since 1978 the Ross' Gull has occurred regularly in small numbers during the nesting season at Churchill, Man. and has bred there successfully (at least in 1980; AB 32, 1177; 34, 839; 35, 951; 36, 989).

(report by B.G. Knapp)

