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CFO-ORC FILE # \_\_\_\_\_

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☒UNUSUAL RECORD ☐

Rcd 12/28/00 upl

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

Species: Slaty-backed Gull | Larus Schistisagus  
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): March 6 & 12, 2000Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Adult non-breedingLocality: Horseshoe Lake Elevation: 5000Nearest town: Loveland County: LarimerTime(s) observed: 3/6 2:30 - 4:30 PM 3/12 2-3 PMDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): hours all together

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

David Ely

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

Hundreds (incl. Leukering, Drismore, Vander Poel, M. Janos, C. Wood, Mammiger, V. Sowsky, B. Prater, Reddall, Svingen, Percival, R. Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):variousOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): binoculars & scopes 8-60xDistance, and how measured: as close as 40 yardsIf photographed, type of equipment and film: Video: Kolotoff & Vanderpoel / Camera C.Who else photographed the bird? others?R. Siebe  
(video:  
published  
CFO Vol. 31  
p. 78)

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

Loafing on beach and flying. Nothing particularly "special" about any of these actions. I assume this bird was attracted to the same extensive beach, privacy and food resources that attracted all the gulls present.

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:

Large adult gull, slightly larger than nearby Herring Gull. Mantle and scapulars dark gray (about the same as Lesser Black-backed Gull, or very slightly darker). On non-flying bird, color of lesser median greater coverts same as mantle & scapulars. Eye pale yellowish broad smudge around eye (gave bird "black-eyed" look). Bill yellow @ red spot just back from tip of lower mandible. Rear of spot black. Tip of one or two scapulars nearest midline of back white (these appear a white spot amid dark gray at top of wing at rest about midway bet base of neck and tip of tail). On wing at rest, exposed secondaries and primaries black. Tips of 2 or 3 primaries with large white spots on resting wing. Head mottled white & gray. In good light, back of head and side of neck in fine brown streaks (vertically arranged). Breast, belly, flanks and undertail coverts white. Legs and feet bright pink. On wing at rest, tertials exposed were white.

Description (continued):  
Flying bird showed broad white margin to the wing (all the secondaries and the first several primaries). Primaries 9 & 10 (also 8?) with large white spots, black tips. Primary's 7, 8, & 9 appeared to have additional subterminal white spots (both upper & lower wing views). Tail white throughout (both surfaces).

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

not heard

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

Drawn down, shallow reservoir in spring after spring melt.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Pink-legs, size, bulk, subterminal white spots & broad trailing white wing margin separated it from Lesser Black-backed Gull. Smaller bill, subterminal white wing spots, broad white trailing margin to wing separated it from Western Gull.

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

First time I'd ever seen Slaty-backed Gull. I have seen several Lesser B-backed Gulls, Western Gulls, Herring Gulls, Great Black-Backed Gulls.

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

a) at time of observation: Nat'l Geo., Grant (gull book)

b) after observation: everything, incl. Sibley Guide

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation X from memory       
Date and time report was written: November 26, 2000

Reporting observer: David Leatherman Signature: David Leatherman

Address: 612 Stevens St #7 Fort Collins, CO 80524

970/416-0193 (home)

970/491-6303 (work)

dleather@lamar.colostate.edu

RESULTS:

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

rcd 3/10/00

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWINGS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NECESSARY)

SPECIES: SLATY-BACKED GULL LARUS SCHISTISAGUS  
(Common Name) (Scientific Name)DATE(S) OF OBSERVATION: MARCH 7, 2000NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: UNKNOWN PLUMAGE: BASIC, WINTEREXACT LOCATION: BEYSON AND HORSESHOE LAKESCOUNTY: LARIMER NEAREST TOWN: LOVELAND ELEVATION: 5700'LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 90 MINUTES TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 3-5 pm

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW THE BIRD(S) WITH YOU:

RACHEL KOLZIKOFF, JOHN VANDERPOEL, MARIC JANOS, CHRIS WOOD, DAVID ELY ETC

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S):

DAVID LEATHERMAN

LIGHT CONDITIONS (QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION):

CLOUDY TO PARTLY SUNNY LATER BETWEEN 4 and 4.30 pm.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED:

20-60X TELESCOPEDISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): 70 - 80 m.WAS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? YES IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS? NOWHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? RACHEL KOLZIKOFF

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED:

BIRD FIRST SEEN SITTING ON A SMALL LAKE, THEN IN A SHORELINE  
OF HORSESHOE LAKE.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

SITTING ON LAKE, THEN FLEW OFF. ON HORSESHOE IT WAS WALKING  
IN VERY SHALLOW WATER, TAKING A BATH, AND LAFFING AROUND.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD IN DETAIL. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS REPORT. INCLUDE THE OVERALL SIZE AND SHAPE AND HOW YOU PLACED THE BIRD IN THE GENERAL GROUP THAT YOU DID. GIVE COMPLETE DETAILS OF PLUMAGE, INCLUDING HEAD, THROAT, UNDERSIDES, NAPE, BACK, WINGS AND TAIL. GIVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO MARKS YOU USED TO IDENTIFY THE BIRD(S). DESCRIBE OTHER DETAILS, SUCH AS COLOR AND SHAPE OF BILL, LEGS, EYE, ETC. THAT WERE IMPORTANT IN MAKING THE IDENTIFICATION. (FILL OUT THIS PORTION EVEN IF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE SUBMITTED; YOU MAY ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS, DRAWINGS, FIELD SKETCHES OR COPY OF FIELD NOTES):

THIS WAS A LARGE GULL AND CLEARLY LARGER THAN THE HERRING GULLS NEARBY. IT WAS NOT AS LARGE AS A GREAT B-B GULL, AND ALTHOUGH THE MANTLE WAS VERY DARK, IT WAS NOT JET BLACK LIKE GREAT B-B OR KEMP GULLS. THE YELLOW BILL WAS LONGISH, BUT VERY DEEP WITH NO NOTICEABLE ~~CONTOUR~~ ANGLE. AT REST, THE TERTIAL CRESCENT WAS VERY BROAD, AND IN FLIGHT THE WHITE TRAILING EDGE OF THE SECONDARIES WAS ALSO VERY BROAD. WHEN THE BIRD STRETCHED ITS WING, IN ADDITION TO WHITE PRIMARY WING TIPS, THERE WERE WHITE MIRRORS ON SEVERAL PRIMARIES GIVING THE EFFECT OF A SERIES OF WHITE PATCHES AWAY FROM THE WING TIP. THE MIRROR ON P10 WAS VERY LARGE (SEEN AT REST). THE LEGS WERE QUITE LONG AND BRIGHT PINK. THE HEAD MARKINGS WERE MODERATE, CONCENTRATED NEAR THE EYE.

DESCRIBE BIRD'S CALL OR SONG:

NOTE HEARD

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM:

GREAT B-B GULL: SIZE, MANTLE COLOR, WING TIP PATTERN, BILL SHAPE

LESSER B-B GULL: SIZE, WING-TIP PATTERN, LEG COLOR, BILL SIZE.

HERRING GULL: SIZE, MANTLE COLOR, WING TIP PATTERN

KEMP GULL: WING TIP PATTERN, LEG COLOR. WESTERN GULL: WING TIP PATTERN, BILL SHAPE.

BAND-TAILED GULL AND BLACK-TAILED GULL: TAIL WAS PURE WHITE. WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES?

HAVE NEVER SEEN THIS SPECIES BEFORE. AM FAMILIAR WITH GREAT AND LESSER

B-B GULLS HERE AND IN EUROPE. HAVE SEEN KEMP AND BAND-TAILED GULL.

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GUIDE DURING OBSERVATION,

LARGE GULL VIDEO BEFORE OBSERVATION

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING \_\_\_\_\_ OR AFTER ☒ OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY \_\_\_\_\_.

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: MARCH 8 2000

REPORTING OBSERVER: PETER R. GENT

SIGNATURE: Peter R. Gent

OBSERVER ADDRESS:

55 S 35th St,  
BOULDER,

CO 80303.

SEND REPORT TO:

COLORADO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

c/o BILL LISOWSKY

2919 SILVERPLUME DR.

FT. COLLINS, CO 80526

Red 5/21/00 wpl

SPECIES: SLATY BACKED GULL  
(Vernacular Name)

LARUS SCHISTISA  
(Scientific)

2000 - 164

DATE(S): 3/7/00; 3/9/00; 4/2/00 TIME OF OBSERVATION: 3:15 P.M. TO 3:50 P.M.  
(3/9) 4:50 TO 5:30

EXACT LOCATION: ROBERT ANDSON RESERVOIR, HORSESHOE RES ON 3/9, LAR. CTY CANCELL  
ON 4/2/00

NEAREST TOWN: FT. COLLINS COUNTY: LARIMER

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

DAVE ELY, DAVE LEATHERMAN, MARK JANDS, CHRIS WOOD, ARANDSON  
PERCIVAL AND MANY OTHER OBSERVERS

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: BAUSCH & LOMB ELITE BINOCULARS, BUSHNELL SPACEMASTER SCOPE

WEATHER CONDITIONS: OVERCAST BUT BRIGHT

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: NO SUN SHINING THROUGH ON 3/7; BRIGHTER ON 3/9

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 250-300 YDS ESTIMATED ON 3/7,  
50 YDS ESTIMATED ON 3/9, 35-45 YDS ON 4/2/00

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: \_\_\_\_\_ PLUMAGE: ADULT

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: SWIMMING AMONG HERRING GULLS, CALIFORNIA GULLS  
AND RING-BILLED GULLS IN A MIXED FLOCK OF APPROXIMATELY 200 BIRDS.  
THE BIRD WAS VERY SLIGHTLY LARGER THAN HERRING GULL, BUT THE  
HEAD AND NECK LOOKED THICKER, DARKER BACKED THAN THE LESSER  
BLACK BACKED GULLS SEEN AT HORSESHOE LAKE LESS THAN ONE HOUR  
PREVIOUS, LARGE WHITE CRESCENT SEEN IN FOLDED WING

HEAD & NECK (forehead, crown, auricular & malar regions, median line, etc.):  
WHITISH WITH BROWNISH-GRAY STREAKING MOST ABUNDANT AROUND THE EYE,  
BUT NAPE, TOP OF HEAD, AND BACK OF NECK STREAKED QUITE WELL, FRONT OF  
NECK WHITISH.

EYES & LORES (supercilium, eye-ring, eye-stripe, color, etc.): YELLOW EYES,  
CONSIDERABLE STREAKING AROUND EYE.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES (color & shape): BILL SOMEWHAT STRAIGHT WITH NO  
PRONOUNCED GONYDEAL ANGLE; COLOR YELLOWISH BEIGE WITH FAINT REDDISH-ORANGE  
LEGS & FEET: DARKER PINK THAN HERRING OR GLAUCOUS GULL SPOT

UPPERPARTS (nape, back, rump, uppertail coverts, etc.): BLACKISH GRAY, HALF  
WAY BETWEEN THE COLOR OF THE NORMAL VAGRANT LESSER BLACK  
BACKED GULL AND AN ADULT GREAT BLACK BACKED GULL.

UNDERPARTS (chin, throat, belly, sides, flanks, crissum, etc.): LOWER FRONT  
NECK WHITISH BLENDING WITH PURE WHITE BREAST. WHILE FLYING,  
LOWER BELLY AND UNDERTAIL COVERTS APPEARED ALL WHITE.

RETRICES (inner, middle & outer tail feathers; color, pattern, shape, etc.):

WHILE FLYING OR, THE ENTIRE TAIL WAS WHITE

(3/3) WHITE TAIL

WINGS (color, length, shape, bars, coverts, etc.): SAME COLOR AS BACK;

EXTENDED ONLY TO END OF TAIL; VERY BROAD WHITE TRAILING EDGE TO WINGS MUCH BROADER THAN HERRING GULL; UNDERSIDE OF WINGS MEDIUM GRAY WITH DARKER TIPS TO PRIMARIES; ROW OF WHITE SPOTS 1/3 WAY FROM TIP OF

PRIMARIES \*

VOCALIZATION (call/song, method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight):

NONE

HABITAT: LAKES

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL SMALLER AND NOT AS DARK; DOES NOT HAVE GRAY UNDERWINGS AT THE PRIMARIES, DOES NOT HAVE SERIES OF WHITE SPOTS UNDER THE WING

WESTERN GULL DOES NOT HAVE GRAY UNDERWING AT PRIMARIES AND DOES NOT HAVE SERIES OF WHITE SPOTS UNDER THE WING. ALSO

DOES NOT TYPICALLY HAVE AS MUCH STREAKING ON HEAD IN WINTER

YELLOW FOOTED GULL DOES NOT HAVE GRAY UNDERWING AT PRIMARIES AND DOES NOT HAVE SERIES OF WHITE SPOTS UNDER THE WING, DOES NOT HAVE DARK LEGS

GREAT BLACK BACKED GULL MUCH LARGER AND DARKER BACKED; DIFFERENT WING PATTERN

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

THIS IS MY FIRST SLATY BACKED GULL. I HAVE SEEN APPROX 1 DOZEN LESSER BLACK BACKED GULLS AND HAVE SEEN HUNDREDS OF WESTERN GULLS. I HAVE ALSO SEEN TWO YELLOW FOOTED GULLS AND THREE ADULT GREAT BLACK BACKED GULLS.

ADDITIONAL WING INFO: UPSIDE OF WING HAS A SERIES OF WHITE SPOTS BETWEEN THE GRAY INNER WING AND THE BLACK PRIMARY TIPS STARTING ON P3 OR P4

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

GRANT'S "GULLS" BOOK, AUDUBON MASTER GUIDE SERIES, HARRISON'S "SEABIRDS" BOOK, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GUIDE

THIS REPORT WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING ☒ AFTER ☒ OBSERVATION; ☐ FROM MEMORY

NAME: JOE MAMMOSER

SIGNATURE: *Joe Mammoser*

DATE: 3/8/00

Date: 3/12/00 8:39:43 PM Mountain Standard Time  
 From: oly@ecentral.com  
 To: NCSWPL@aol.com (Bill Lisowsky)  
 CC: flammowl@juno.com (Brandon K. Percival)

*Red 3/13/00 wpl*

# Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

CFO-RC FILE:  
 RESULTS:

**Species:** (Common Name) **Slaty-backed Gull** (Scientific Name) *Larus schistisagus*

**Date(s) of occurrence:** March 7, 2000

**Number of birds seen:** one Sex: probable male Plumage: basic adult

**Exact location:** 1) Robert Benson Lake 2) northern shoreline of Horseshoe Lake

**County:** Larimer **Nearest town:** Loveland **Elevation:** 5150? feet

**Length of observation:** 1) 15 minutes 2) 30 minutes **Time(s) of observation:**

1) 15:40 - 15:55 2) 16:35 - 17:05

**Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you:** 22 to 27 others (Percival, Wood, Janos, Van der Poel, Gent Ely, Leatherman, etc.)

**Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s):**

**Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position:** Cloudy, light rain showers in the area, wind calm becoming easterly to about 15 mph. Sun would have been at observers back at both locations.

**Optical equipment used:** Ziess 10 X 40, Kowa TSN4 with 20 X 60 zoom

**Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted):** 1) 100 yards 2) 70 to 100 yards

**Was bird(s) photographed?** Yes If so, have you submitted photos? no

**Who took the photographs?** R. Kolokof, C. Wood, J. Van der Poel

**Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred:**

Reservoir type lakes

**Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification):** Resting and preening on the water and on the shore.

**Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes):** The bird was a large gull, larger than the surrounding Herring and California Gulls. The bill was yellow, rather thick through out, without a pronounced gonial angle and a red spot at the gonys. The iris was yellow and the legs were a reddish bubblegum pink. The head was flat, white in color with dark streaking extending on to the nape and neck. The streaking condensed around the eye especially in front of the eye giving the bird a large eyed look. The mantle, back and upper wings were a dark gray almost black, yet slightly paler (noticeable) than the black primaries. This was noticed only on the resting bird. (This bird was seen standing next to a 3rd basic Lesser Black-backed Gull at Horseshoe Lake, the mantle color of both birds was remarkably similar!) Large white tertial crescents and smaller scapular crescents were present. The tail and under parts were white. The spread upper wing showed the following: P10 was black with a white tip and a separate large white mirror. P9 was black, white tipped with a smaller separated white mirror. P8 was black, white tipped and appeared to be lacking (or very small) any mirror. P7, P6, P5 were also white tipped with a white tongue slowly approaching the feather tip the closer you got to P1. The inner primaries and secondaries had large

white ends giving the wing a thick white trailing edge. The under side of the wing was gray with a noticeable white trailing edge, and slightly contrasting darker "bar" on the outer primaries.

**Describe bird's call or song:** none heard

**Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:** I basically asked Jon Van der Poel what he thought. However, the wing color and pattern on the primaries pretty much eliminates Western, Lesser Black-backed and Greater Black-backed Gulls. The head streaking also helps eliminate Western and Greater Black-backed Gulls. The main confusion species lies with the vega race of the Herring Gull. Size, mantle color and under wing contrast seem to be main separating differences.

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

None

**List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation):** Talking with J. Van der Poel, Large Gull video by Van der Poel/ Dunn. Gulls by P.J. Grant 2nd Ed.

This report is from notes made during X ( taped ) or after X ( taped ) observation or later from memory

**Date of written report:** March 12, 2000

**Reporting observer:** Ric Olson **Signature:**

**Reporting Observer's Address :** 9450 N. Heather Dr. Castle Rock , 80104  
303-790-7753

**City:** State: Zip:

**Send report to:** Colorado Birds Record Committee c/o Bill Lisowsky 2919 Silverplume Dr. Ft. Collins, Co. 80526

Thanks

Ric

Castle Rock

# Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

2000 - 164

(This is a two-page report. Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.)

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

*Red 2/5/01 upl*

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

Species:(Common Name) SLATY-BACKED GULL (Scientific Name) Larus schistisagus

Date(s) of occurrence: 8 and 12 March 2000

Number of birds seen: One Sex: Unknown Plumage: Fourth-basic

Exact location: On 8 March the bird was present on the northwest corner of Horseshoe Lake on the north side of the City of Loveland and on XX March it was on Lake Loveland in the west-central portion of Loveland.

County: Larimer Nearest town: Loveland Elevation:

Length of observation: Approximately 30 minutes on 8 March and roughly 20 minutes on 12 March. Time(s) of observation: Approximately 3:30 PM MST on 8 March and 5:15 PM MST on 12 March

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Nick Komar and others.

Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): Many observers

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: Mostly sunny skies, facing east with setting sun to back.

Optical equipment used: 8 x 40 Binoculars, 32X Spotting Scope

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): Roughly 60 yards on 8 March and approximately 200 yards on 12 March.

Was bird(s) photographed? Yes If so, have you submitted photos? Yes

Who took the photographs? Larry Semo and many others

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: Exposed mudflat of Horseshoe Reservoir on 8 March and open water of Lake Loveland on 12 March.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): On 8 March, the bird was loafing and sleeping for the majority of the observation time. Final observations on that date occurred when the bird flew south-southwest probably to roost on Lake Loveland. On 12 March, the bird was observed swimming.

Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes): A search of a mudflat in the northwestern corner of Horseshoe Lake revealed a large, black-mantled gull roosting with numerous Ring-billed and California Gulls as well as a few Herring Gulls. The following reflects notes on various identification points scribed to notes in the field.

**Overall Size and Shape:** A noticeably very large gull, bulky, and robust gull, especially in comparison the nearby Ring-billed and California Gulls. Slightly larger than nearby Herring Gulls. Roughly 1/4 larger than Thayer's, 2/3 larger than California, and 40% to roughly 1/2 larger than Ring-billed. Though only slightly larger in overall length/height as Herring, the subject bird was more heavily built, broad-chested, and pot-bellied.

**Bill:** Color a dull yellow with bright orange gonys. The bill seemed slightly thicker at the gonys (quite small gonydeal angle for a gull of this size), though was relatively even throughout with a slightly drooped tip to the upper mandible. Compared to nearby Herring Gulls, the bill seemed thicker and stouter overall.

**Head:** A flat but angular crown. Rather heavy dark-brown streaking on lower edge of rear crown, nape, sides of neck, and upper portions of breast. Portions of neck a smudgy mud-brown. Forehead, lores, and throat white. Anthropomorphically, it looked "mean" due to extensive dark smudging around the eye, suggesting an almost "black-eyed" appearance.

**Eyes:** Very light yellow (almost whitish).

**Underparts:** Upper breast white streaked with dark brown. Lower breast, belly, and undertails wholly white.

**Mantle:** Mantle very dark gray (almost blackish), seemingly as dark as Great Black-backed. Similar in shade to Lesser Black-backed.

**Wings:** Wings (except primary tips) same shade of dark, gray/black as mantle. When standing, primary tips a contrastingly darker shade than rest of wings and mantle (pure black) except for small white terminal mirrors. Noticeable was a very broad, white tertial band and scapulars. The width of the relative width of the tertials was seemingly wider than that of nearby Herring and California (and greatly wider than Ring-billed Gulls) in proportion their respective body sizes. In flight, the wings appeared quite broad with respect to other flying gulls. When in flight from beneath, the undersides of the wings were noticeably white/silvery except for the contrasting dark gray primaries and outer secondaries. Though not at first obvious, Nick Komar pointed out the "string of pearls" affect typical for the species. From beneath, an offset line of subterminal white mirrors to the outer primaries became evident. These diagnostic spots were separated distally by black in the primaries and the white terminal mirrors forming an almost "double white string. When in flight (in views from beneath and while banked) there was a prominently broad, white trailing edge to wings (especially secondaries).

**Legs:** Bright pink, a deeper pink than that of nearby Herring Gulls.

Describe bird's call or song: None heard

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:

In Colorado, any dark-mantled large gulls are unusual to varying degrees. Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls are typically the obvious choice for occurrence in the state. Though the subject bird was similar in shade to that of a Lesser Black-backed Gull, the much smaller size of Lesser Black-backed negates it from further analysis. Other potential dark-mantled large gull candidates that could (conceivably) be observed in the state include Great Black-backed, Western (subspecies *wymani*), Herring (subspecies *vegae*), Kelp, and Yellow-footed; no accepted records for the last four species exist for Colorado.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** Adult Great Black-backed differs from Slaty-backed in being slightly darker mantled and winged, having duller pink legs, possessing a very different bill shape (much thicker with expansive gonydeal angle), would lack the "string of pearls", and would usually not be or would be remotely head-streaked in basic plumage.

**Western Gull:** Western Gulls of the southern race *wymani* have similar mantle and wing shades as Slaty-backed Gulls. Western Gulls differ by also lacking the string of pearls, being not streaked in winter (some may have grayish blotching quite unlike the heavily streaked head and nape of the subject bird), and by having a much more heavily built bill.

**Herring Gull:** Herring Gulls of the Siberian race *vegae* can be a similar mantle and wing shade to lighter-colored Slaty-backed (though the subject bird was a darker individual). The majority of *vegae* should look slightly lighter at close range. *Vegae* will not show such large tertial crescents and will also show more contrast in the color of the wingtips than Slaty-backed.

**Kelp Gull:** Kelp Gulls would be slightly smaller than Slaty-backed and some even smaller than Herring Gulls. The mantle of a Kelp Gull would be even darker than a Slaty-backed. The primary tips of a kelp often do not exhibit any white mirrors. Leg color is extremely important; Kelp Gulls have a greenish legs while Slaty-backed has bright pink.

**Yellow-footed Gull:** Yellow-footed Gulls have similar mantle and wing coloration as Slaty-backed but are smaller and have much thicker bills. Mainly, however, Yellow-footed Gulls, by their name, have yellow legs, not pink.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? None. Though I have no actual observation experience with Slaty-backed Gulls, I have observed numerous Great Black-backed and Western Gulls and have observed Kelp Gull on a couple of occasions in Texas. Experience with these other species helped eliminate these species as possible candidates.

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): I reviewed "Seabirds: An Identification Guide", the National Geographic Guide, and the Large Gulls of North America following observation of the Slaty-backed Gull. Review of this literature/video helped confirm the identification.

This report is from notes made during ☒ or after ☐ observation or later ☐ from memory

Date of written report: 10/30/00

Reporting observer: Larry Semo

Signature:



Reporting Observer's Address: 9054 Dover Street

City: Westminster

State: Colorado

Zip: 80021

Send report to:  
Colorado Birds Record Committee  
c/o Bill Lisowsky  
2919 Silverplume Dr.  
Ft. Collins, Co. 80526



Slaty backed Gull  
Larry Sano

2000-164