

2002-112

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

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

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

ACCEPTED

CFO-RC FILE X: 2002-112

RESULTS:Species:(Common Name) **Black-legged Kittiwake** (Scientific Name) *Rissa tridactyla*

Date(s) of occurrence: 12/06/02

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Adult basic

Exact location: Union Reservoir

County: Weld Nearest town: Longmont Elevation: ~5000 feet

Length of observation: About 10 min Time(s) of observation: Approx. 4:15 to 4:25 p.m.

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Chris Wood

Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): none known at time of report

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: Just after sunset, light rapidly fading. Bird was to the north, lit up from the left.

Optical equipment used: Kowa TSN 823 w/ 32X W.A. eyepiece

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): Bird was about 300 – 400 meters away

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

Who took the photographs?

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: Large front range water storage reservoir.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): Chris Wood spotted the bird flying in to join several hundred gulls that were associating with a large flock of mergansers. I didn't initially see the flying bird, and it got lost in the crowd. A while later, I re-found the bird sitting on the water a bit beyond the melee, where we observed it until the light faded too much and we were too cold to continue.

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 way I initially spotted the bird in the water was by noticing the mantle, which was a bit darker than the nearby Ring-billed Gulls (RBGU). Additionally, the bird appeared a bit longer-winged than the RBGUs nearby, and the primary tips appeared completely black. The bill appeared to be a bit more delicate and droopy than the nearby RBGUs', and more uniform in color. The bill didn't appear to be as bright yellow as expected, instead appearing grayish to me. I don't know if this was a dark-billed individual, or if the fading light and distance prevented seeing the true color. The head appeared to be mostly white, with dark smudging behind the eye and on the nape. The breast and sides were clean white. The bird was about the size of nearby RBGUs, but appeared to be a bit more delicately built. This more delicate appearance could be an artifact of the relatively longer wing tips. I did not see the legs or outspread wings. The bird was too distant to accurately judge the iris color with complete confidence, but it appeared dark eyed, without distinct smudging around the eye.

Describe bird's call or song: Not heard.

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: As discussed above, this bird had a darker mantle, was longer winged, had a more delicate bill that lacked a sub-terminal band, and lacked the white in the primaries of nearby adult RBGU. Additionally, the head didn't appear as domed as in RBGU. The bird appeared to be to small for other larger gulls seen in Colorado, such as CAGU, HERG, THGU, GLGU, LBBG, etc. and the bill was also too delicate for the larger gulls I am familiar with. The bird was larger and lacked other plumage features found in the small hooded gulls such as FRGU, BOGU, and CBHG. Although LAGU would approach BLKI in size, the bill was too small, the mantle was too pale, and the breast was too pale for LAGU. MEGU would also be similar in size, but this bird lacked the white in the primaries of an adult, and didn't have the extensive white crescents or more extensive head smudging of various ages of MEGU. SAGU would also be ruled out on size, as well as the lack of the partial hood. RLKI, in addition to being much more unlikely, would also be smaller than this bird, and exhibit a smaller bill.

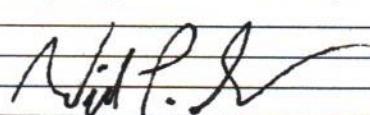
What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I've seen one other adult and one juvenile BLKI in Colorado.

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): After observation I consulted The Sibley Guide to Birds and Seabirds, an Identification Guide.

This report is from notes made during and after observation.

Date of written report: 12/13/02

Reporting observer: William P. Schmoker

Signature: 

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