

LAUGHING GULL

Larus atricilla

23-95-37

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name)

ACCEPT 7-0

DATE OF OBSERVATION	TIME OF OBSERVATION	NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN	SEX	PLUMAGE
8-31-95	1730 TO 1740	one	Unknown	Juvenal
9-2-95	0920 TO 0950	one	Unknown	Juvenal
	TO			

LOCALITY: Cherry Creek ReservoirELEVATION: 5400' COUNTY: Apache

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD (Names, Addresses, Telephone Number):

None that I am aware ofOPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 9.5 X 44 Celestron Binoculars; 15X-60X B/L Zoom TelescopeWEATHER CONDITIONS: Partly cloudy on 8-31; Partly cloudy to mostly cloudy on 9-2.BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: Directly upon bird from behind observation 8/31; from obs. right on 9-2.DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 150' up to 500'; estimated

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: First observed standing on a mud flat with a large flock of California Gulls (*Larus californicus*) and Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) opposite the Prairie View Overlook. Bird stood quietly during short period of observation before abruptly taking flight out over the reservoir where it was joined by an adult Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*). Both birds settled on the water about 500' from observer. On 9/2, bird was observed at some mud flat about 150' away and closely and carefully observed for 30 minutes as it intently preened its feathers. Finally walked over to a small willow along the shore and began plucking some of the leaves off the leaves.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION (EMPHASIS ON KEY FIELD MARKS): Relative size and shape; plumage and color pattern of head, upperparts and underparts; shape and color of bill, wings, tail, feet and legs; eye color.

only slightly smaller than many near-by Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) but much more slender appearing with wings extending well beyond the tail. Bill black. Head and nape brown. Iris dark. White eye-crescents nearly joined behind the eye but separated in front of the eye. Forehead and chin (area around bill) pale. Upper breast and sides brownish and unmarked. Rest of underparts white. Legs dark. NOTE: Head shape somewhat flattened on crown sloping gently to the base of the bill. Mantle brown with individual feathers edged and tipped with pale creating a scaly appearance. Mantle same shade and color as nape and crown (no indication of any hooded effect on head). Primaries on upper wing black completely lacking with any white mirrors or markings. Secondaries dark, dull brown edged and tipped in white. Wing coverts same color as mantle and broadly fringed in white. Underwing with black primaries, dark secondaries and with a whitish lining. (Flight much stronger than Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) and wings somewhat longer and more scuffed.)

DETAILED DESCRIPTION (continued): Rump white and unmarked. Tail whitish with broad, complete black terminal band, fringed narrowly in white.

HABITAT: Mudflats at edge of fresh-water reservoir and on the reservoir itself.

VOCALIZATION (call/song; how delivered-perched, in flight; frequency; duration):

None Heard.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES: (JUVENAL PLUMAGE IN ALL CASES)

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Larus pipixcan*): Averages about 2" smaller in length and is more compact body-wise with somewhat shorter, more rounded wings and a more fluttering flight. Has a partial dark brown hood which is lacking in juvenal *L. atricilla*. Head more rounded and bill smaller.

Innermost primaries, secondaries and coverts brownish-gray (no gray at all in *L. atricilla*). Sub-terminal band incomplete (outer retrices white).

SABINE'S GULL (*Xema sabini*): Quite similar in appearance at first blush, but much smaller and daintier. When flying the similarity ends quickly with its black, white and gray striking triangles on the upper wing. Tail is notched, not square as in *L. atricilla*.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

LAUGHING GULL: Seen multitudes from the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida west along the Gulf Coast to Texas since the early 1950's. Also seen regularly on Long Island, NY during past 45 years. Seen in Colorado but three times (all juvenals or first-winter birds): Pueblo Reservoir, Ute Reservoir and Lake Henry.

FRANKLIN'S GULL: Seen thousands upon thousands primarily in fall migration in Colorado (northeastern reservoirs) in all plumages since 1964.

SABINE'S GULL: See one or two (mostly juvenals) each fall in eastern Colorado. Also seen in Alaska, off the coast of California and once off Long Island, NY (fall-adult).

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding (Vol. 2)

Field Guide to the Birds of North America (Second Edition)

THIS REPORT WAS WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING X AFTER OBSERVATION; FROM MEMORY

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DATE: 9/2/95