

ACCEPTED (7-0)

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

LAUGHING GULL

Larus atricillaLocation: Rocky Ford sewage ponds; Rocky Ford; Otero County, ColoradoDate: October 4-11, 1998Setting:

(9/26/98)

This bird was discovered by Brandon Percival and others on a field trip several days earlier. It was seen by scores of observers during its stay. It was present for 2-3 weeks in all. It was usually seen lounging on the exposed mud flats of the second sewage lagoons with many other gulls (including Franklin's and Ring-billed) and shorebirds – often standing on an exposed sewage pipe. Light was behind us and good on both days that I observed the bird in my Kowa TSN-40 scope. The distance was about 50-150 yards. I observed the bird for a total of about 40 minutes – both perched and in flight.

Description:

This was a first year bird. It was about the size of a Ring-billed gull but a little more slender – and slightly larger than a Franklin's Gull (with which it was most similar). It stood out from the Franklin's Gulls by being larger, larger-billed and darker-mantled. The back and scapulars were dark gray and graded more or less gradually into black on the primaries. The bird was extensively dusky, with grayish wash on flanks, breast, head, crown and face. The upper breast and throat were whiter. There was a more marked grayish smudge to the face and hindneck – the suggestion of a hood. In flight the wings were quite dark, darker than Franklin's Gulls, with blackish primaries above and below and a dark secondary bar and distinctly brown innerwing coverts. The rump was white and the tail less white with a very wide black subterminal band (more extensive than in Franklin's Gull). The legs and feet were black. The bill was black, quite large (proportionately larger than Franklin's Gull) and drooped noticeably.

Similar Species:

The presence of a partial hood eliminate many other gulls. Of the "black-headed" species, Bonaparte's, Little and Common Black-headed are smaller, much lighter on the back, and lack the black on the wing tip. The Franklin's Gull is smaller, with a smaller bill, has less dark in the wing, is paler gray overall and has a less extensive black subterminal tail band (see description).

Experience with Species:

I have seen thousands of Laughing and Franklin's Gulls.

This report is prepared from notes and from memory.

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