

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTING

2001-120

Species: Laughing Gull

Date: Nov. 30 2001

Time seen: 1300-1330

11-9 Dec 01

ACCEPTED

Locality: South Platte River, 300 yards south of 74th Avenue, Adams County

Latilong: 39104 Optical equipment: Binoculars

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: Unknown Plumage: 1st year basic.

Light conditions: Good; sun behind us.

Distance from bird: 100 feet. We looked down on it from a bridge across the river.

Weather at time of observation: Sunny, windy

Describe habitat: River with cobblestones covering the bank on what otherwise we might call a sandbar; some willows 25-50 feet up the bank. In fact one willow grew on the bar and as the gull moved the willow obscured our view.

Describe behavior: Gull fed, solitarily, along cobblestones on edge of water. It picked at the rocks and moved along the edge. When flushed it flew up with other gulls and then lit where we could observe it again. It did not associate with the 50 or so Ring-bills that stood 20-75 feet away.

Field marks observed: size, color, pattern, shape, bill, etc.:

Size: smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls perched along the sand/stone bar.

We first noticed the short, thin black bill (slightly drooped) and black legs.

Gray flanks, about the same color as the back. They seemed extensive, almost to the belly.

Head white with a dark band that went back from the eye, then curved over the back of the head; from eye to head the stripe had the shape of the letter "L." Dark eye. White crescents above and below eye.

In flight, it had dark primaries (no white spots), brownish tertials. Whitish underneath.

Tail, in flight showed a dark band across the end.

Bird's call or song: No sounds heard

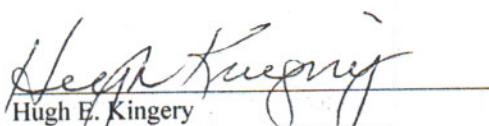
Field marks not seen: I did not study the underwing pattern.

Similar species: Franklin's Gull only similar species. Franklin's has a different head pattern (more black from eye across back of head), may show white spots in wings, and lacks the gray flanks that characterized this bird. Wing pattern and face pattern distinguish it from other black-headed gulls such as Bonaparte's, Black-headed, Sabine's, and kittiwake.

Prior experience: I've seen lots of Laughing Gulls in the east, but never watched them as closely as I watched this bird. I don't recall studying immatures before.

Description from: Notes taken in field .

Other observers: Urling Kingery first noticed the bird. Dick Schottler and Bob Spencer also observed it. Dick first called it a Laughing Gull.


Hugh E. Kingery
PO Box 584, Franktown CO 80116

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

(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!

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

Species: (Common Name): Laughing Gull	(Scientific Name) Larus atricilla
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Date(s) of occurrence: December 1, 2001		
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Number of birds seen: One	Sex: Unknown	Plumage: Basic I
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Exact Location: Standley Lake		
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County: Jefferson	Nearest town: Arvada/Westminster	Elevation: XX msl
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Length of observation: Approximately 20 minutes	Time(s) of observation: Early morning
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Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: None		
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Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): **None at Standley Lake. Hugh Kingery reported a bird a few days prior along the South Platte that very likely was the same individual considering that Standley Lake hosts a large number of roosting gulls during winter.**

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: **Good. Bird was to west and sun was to east of myself.**

Optical equipment used: 7x42 Zeiss Bins, 20x60 Leica Televid 77 Scope		
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Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): Varied. Closest was approximately 200 feet		
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Was bird(s) photographed? Yes (video)	If so, have you submitted photos? Yes, stills from video
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Who took the photographs? Myself		
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Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: Beach of open water lake.		
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Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): Bird was observed loafing and foraging along shore, and also in flight.		
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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 in close association with Ring-billed, California, and Herring Gulls. Compared to the three, the subject bird was noticeably smaller than Herring and California Gulls and was somewhat smaller than Ring-billed. Compared to Ring-billed, the Laughing Gull was slimmer in profile and seemed more "stretched out". The all black bill was long, slender, and drooped. The majority of the head was whitish, except for grayish auriculars and nape. The eye was dark. The neck was mostly gray, though the throat was more whitish. Upperpart coloration was generally medium gray, except that the wing coverts, secondaries, and tertials displayed a more brownish cast. The folded primaries were blackish. The underparts were grayish-white. The legs appeared dark gray. The bird occasionally raised its' wings while foraging. Raised wings exposed blackish primaries and gray secondaries with a trailing white margin. Primary and secondary coverts, leading edge of the underwing, and axillars were mainly whitish, except for dark grayish mottling that extended mainly along the "arm" of the wing.





In flight from above, the Laughing Gull was slimmer and longer-winged appearing than other gulls present. The primaries, primary coverts, and alular region looked black and contrasted with grayer secondaries and secondary coverts. There was a noticeable white trailing edge to the secondaries when in flight. The body upperparts appeared grayish in flight as well. When in flight, the uppertail coverts were boldly white and contrasted with a broad black tail band that extended across the entire length of the rectrices.



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

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: **The smaller size and slimmer appearance eliminated all large Larids. Other "hooded" gulls were eliminated by shape and plumage pattern.**

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? **Have observed many thousands of others along the East Coast, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Have also observed vagrant birds in Wisconsin and California as well as two other vagrants in Colorado.**

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): **None**

This report is from notes made during or after **XX** observation or later from memory

Date of written report: **2/22/02**

Reporting observer: **Larry Semo**

Signature:

Reporting Observer's Address: **9054 Dover Street**

City: **Westminster**

State: **Colorado**

Zip: **80021**