

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

rec'd 5/4/04

2002-4

(A)

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

Species:(Common Name) Laughing Gull

(Scientific Name) *Larus atricilla*

Date(s) of occurrence: 3 August, 2001

Number of birds seen: 1 adult, mostly alternate plumage

Location: Jackson Reservoir, Morgan County

Length of observation: 10 minutes

Time(s) of observation: 12:30 - 1:20

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Steph Hanson

Conditions: Warm and sunny.

Optical equipment used: Leica 8 x 42, Leica APO Televid scope, 32x eyepiece.

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): 80 - 300 meters.

Photos: None.

Habitat: Man-made reservoir.

Details:

I was driving on the east side of Jackson Reservoir along 5 road watching a number of Franklin's Gulls flying overhead and over the field on the east side of the reservoir when I noticed a slightly larger dark-headed gull. While larger, it appeared slimmer-bodied, like a Parasitic Jaeger (not chubby and round-winged like a Franklin's Gull). I slid the car off the road, got out and looked at the bird through my binocular.

The underside of the outer primaries was black, becoming more slate-colored on the inner primaries and secondaries. The trailing edge of the inner primaries and secondaries was edged in white. The body, underwing coverts and tail were white. The dark bill appeared longer than the nearby Franklin's Gulls. The upper-surface of the upperparts was the same color as the nearby adult Franklin's Gulls, but with more extensive black in the outer primaries and without any white in the outer primaries, including the primary tips. The bird flew south and I eventually lost it.

About half an hour later I refound the bird sitting on the shore on the northeast side of the reservoir. The bird was standing directly next to 50+ Franklin's Gulls. In direct comparison, the Laughing Gull was larger, longer-legged, and longer-billed. The dark hood was nearly complete with some white feathers molting onto the crown, forecrown and nape. The eye-arcs were less extensive, and no white was visible on the primary tips.

A well-seen Laughing Gull is unlikely to be confused with any gull other than Franklin's. The lack of dark in the tail or brownish feathers on the wing made it easy to tell it was this bird was an adult. Adult Franklin's can easily be eliminated by size, shape, structure, more black in the primaries from above and below, less prominent eye-arcs, and lack of a gray wash to the tail in flight.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I have studied 10,000s of Laughing Gulls for hours at a time while counting seabirds off of Avalon, NJ. I have seen and studied 10,000s of Franklin's Gulls in Colorado, and at least ten other states and provinces. I consider myself to be very familiar with both species.

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 immediately after observation.

Date of written report: 3 August, 2001

Reporting observer:

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Signature:



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