

2002-45

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

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

ACCEPTED

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CFO-RC FILE X: 2002-45

RESULTS:Species:(Common Name) **Laughing Gull** (Scientific Name) *Larus atricilla*

Date(s) of occurrence: 5/9/02

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

Exact location: West end of North Shore, Union Reservoir, Weld County, Colorado

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

Length of observation: approx. About 30 minutes- bird was still present when I left. Time(s) of observation: 3:45 to 4:15 p.m.

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: None

Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): Scott Rashid, David Waltman, Maggie Boswell

Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: Light conditions were good. Bright afternoon sun was shining from the left of my observing position. Heat waves were present but clear looks were attainable.

Optical equipment used: Kowa 82mm fluorite scope w/32X W.A. eyepiece, Nikon Coolpix 995 digital camera.

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): About 75-100 yards.

Was bird(s) photographed? yes If so, have you submitted photos? Yes (5 photos emailed to Tony Leukering)

Who took the photographs? Bill Schmoker

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: Gently sloping muddy and alkaline-salt crusted shore on artificial plains reservoir.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): The gull was preening and resting on the shore, maintaining independent behavior as other gulls (Ring-billed and Franklin's) came and went.

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):

As seen in the photographs, this was a gull with an extensive black hood, intermediate white eye-arcs, a dark gray back, a powerful, deep red, drooping bill, reddish-black legs, and completely black primaries. It was smaller than nearby Ring-billed Gulls but larger than nearby Franklin's Gulls. The bird had a small white crescent at the base of the scapulars and a white breast.

Describe bird's call or song: Not heard.

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: The size of the bird (bigger than nearby Franklin's Gulls) and the size, shape, and color of the bill quickly eliminated Little and Bonaparte's Gulls from consideration. In addition to the size difference, this gull had less prominent eye-arcs and a much more robust and droopy bill than nearby Franklin's Gulls. In contrast with the FRGUs, this bird also lacked pink on the breast, had a darker back, and lacked any white in the primaries (at least that I could observe). It acted in an independent fashion, while the nearby Franklin's Gulls (about 12) moved as a group. The hood was more extensive and the bill was more robust and droopy than would be expected in a Black-headed Gull. Additionally, the hood was jet black, with no hint of brown that I could detect. I'm not aware of other North American Gulls with extensive black hoods to consider.

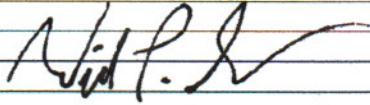
What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? This is the first LAGU I've seen in Colorado. I've seen LAGUs in basic plumage on the Gulf Coast and the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica.

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): While viewing the bird and later at home I consulted The Sibley Guide To Birds. Once home, I also consulted Seabirds of the World, by Jim Enticott and David Tipling, and Seabirds, An Identification Guide, by Peter Harrison.

This report is from notes made during and after observation.

Date of written report: 5/9/02

Reporting observer: William P. Schmoker

Signature: 

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