

1998-60

ACCEPTED (7-0)

CFO-ORC-FILE# \_\_\_\_\_

**COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM**

Results: \_\_\_\_\_

**Species:**

Mew Gull      Larus brachyrhynchus

**Dates:** 5 December 1998**Number of birds seen:** 1**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** 2nd basic**Locality:** Union Reservoir, ~ 150 yds. east of the northwest corner of the reservoir,**Elevation:** ~5000 ft.**Nearest town:** Longmont**County:** Weld**Time observed:** 3:45 pm.**Duration of observation:** approximately 10 minutes**Other observers with you:** Bill Prather**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** None known. Several observers unsuccessfully attempted to find the bird on the morning of 6 December. Bill Prather mentioned later that he found it that afternoon in the same locale at ~4:00.**Light conditions:** Heavy overcast in late afternoon. This might have exaggerated the contrast in mantle color.**Optical equipment:** Leica Trinovid 10X42, Bushnell sentry 36X50 spotting scope, Bill Prather's Kowa (?) spotting scope. I would estimate this one at 25-35X60.**Distance from bird:** Initially 25 meters, after flight 40 meters.**Describe the bird's behavior:** The bird was loafing on the shore with ~50 Ring-billed Gulls. At one point most of the flock flew ~ 30 meters down the shore to the west, before landing.**Describe the bird:** The bird was a medium-sized gull, similar in size to nearby Ring-billed Gulls, but perhaps more slightly built. The head was similar in shape to the RBGU. The bill was slightly shorter and noticeably more slender, with little gonydeal bulge. The bill was grayish-flesh in color, with a dark outer quarter. The very tip was pale, approximating the pattern on an adult RBGU, but with a much broader, less well-defined band. The head was heavily mottled with dark brown, darkest on the nape and around the eye. The mottling continued down the shoulders to the breast. The mantle was dark gray, two to three shades darker than surrounding RBGU, giving the impression that it would have been somewhat darker than an adult California Gull, if one had been present for comparison. **On the folded wing:** The greater and median coverts were dark gray-brown, the lesser coverts, scapulars, and tertiaries dark gray. The primaries were black, with faint pale edging at tip. The outer left primary showed a white mirror, as in adult Mew and RBGU, as seen from the underside of the folded wing. One tertiary on the right side showed a black center -- the left wing was not well observed at rest. **In flight:** The secondaries were dark gray with white tips, the coverts appeared dark gray - no brown was evident. Outer primaries and primary coverts were black. I didn't note the inner primaries, but there was evidently no contrast strong enough to draw the eye. (As in 1st winter Herring Gull, for example.) The tail was white with an interrupted, narrow black terminal or subterminal band. The inner ~ 4 rectrices were entirely white. The leg color was not determined, mostly due to light conditions. A close look (25 meters with scope) showed a dark eye, but I did not note whether pale eyes on surrounding RBGU's were clearly visible.**Describe the bird's song and call if heard:** None heard.**Describe the habitat in which you found the bird:** The bird was on the bare shore of Union Reservoir, which is ~100 acres in area. The shore was backed by ~ 10 meters of willow scrub, with a road and farmhouse inland from there. The entire area is nearly suburban, with Longmont just a few miles away.

**How did you eliminate similarly appearing species:** Franklin's and/or Laughing Gull: No eye crescents, no hooded appearance, white in outer primary (Laughing) and pale base to bill (Franklin's).

Ring-Billed Gull: Mantle much darker, bill noticeably slender and slightly shorter, much heavier mottling on head than usually seen on Ring-bills.

Common Gull: significant retention of juvenile markings in the wings and tail, specifically the brown wash on the coverts and the dark center on one tertiary and the noticeable, if partial, tail band. 2nd winter Common Gull usually shows little if any juvenile wing or tail feathers. The mottling on the head did give me pause: on Mew, this marking is usually quite uniform, in this bird the dark areas appeared mottled and streaked, as is usually seen in Common Gull.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:** This is only the 2nd Mew Gull I have ever seen -- the other being in adult winter plumage. I have never seen a Common Gull. I have seen and studied thousands of Ring-billed Gulls of all ages -- in Chicago there is little else to do in the winter. Similarly, I have observed hundreds of Franklin's Gulls, mostly here in Colorado, and have seen Laughing Gulls on several trips to the Gulf Coast.

**List books if they helped in your identification:** The initial ID was made without any, and the notes were written before referring to any guides. PJ Grants Gulls provided the information necessary to rule out Common Gull.

This report was written from notes taken approximately 90 minutes after observation.

**Reporting observer:** Paul Sweet

Signature: Paul Sweet

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