

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ UNUSUAL RECORD X

ACCEPT 7-0

**Species:** Mew Gull (*Larus [canus] brachyrhynchus*)

Rec'd 3/99 wpl

**Date:** 27 February 1999**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Basic II**Locality:** Jim Hamm Park/Union Res.**Elevation:** about 5400'**Nearest town:** Longmont**County:** Boulder/Weld**Time observed:** about 16:48 - 17:30 MST**Duration of observation:** off and on during that time period for a total of about 15 minutes

**Description:** Doug Faulkner and I stopped by Jim Hamm Park after finding not much of interest on Union Reservoir. There were about 20 Ring-billed Gulls (RBGU) standing on the island in the pond. I noticed one gull lying down that appeared to have a darker mantle and had a strongly-streaked head in contrast to all the other gulls' white, alternate-plumaged, heads. I checked the bird out through my scope and, though I couldn't see the front half of the head, I could see that the bird had a scapular crescent, which would rule out RBGU. So, Doug and I proceeded to study the bird carefully and I took many photographs, though at long distance.

The bird was a smallish gull, smaller than the nearby RBGUs, but not a lot smaller. The head was still in full basic plumage, being whitish with extensive, heavy brown streaking that extended onto the upper breast sides. The extensiveness of the streaking made the head appear mostly dark. The eye was a medium brown. The bill was pale yellow with a slight green cast and, compared to that of the RBGUs, was shorter and thinner with only a very small bit of black that encircled the bill at the gonys. The black on the bill was very thin (1/4 the width of the bands on the bills of the RBGUs) on the mandible and slightly wider on the maxilla. This band was not as distinct as on the RBGUs, nor as well-defined. We compared the bird with one Basic II RBGU in the neighborhood to confirm my thoughts that RBGUs of that age still have much less head streaking and a better-defined bill ring than our bird showed.

The mantle was obviously a couple shades darker gray, with a bluer cast, than the mantles of the RBGUs. The lower two scapulars had wide, well-defined white tips that formed an obvious, though narrow (side-to-side) scapular crescent. The tertials were gray-based, with wide, whitish tips that were not well-defined (the gray graded into whitish), forming a wide, diffuse, tertial crescent. In addition, the tertials had large, black blobs in the centers. The upper wing coverts were approximately the same color and tone as was the mantle, though the coverts appeared slightly paler and much more worn, as if the mantle had been more recently replaced than had the coverts. The wings were long, with three of the blackish primaries extending beyond the tail tip and the next primary in falling just short of the tail tip. The tail was white, with a wide black subterminal tail band (the tail was very-narrowly tipped white); this band occupied about 1/4 to 1/5 of the length of the tail. The band appeared to be broken in the center of the tail, as if the bird had molted one or both of the innermost rectrices, thus having adult-like central rectrices (as RBGUs often do). The underparts were white, with the aforementioned brown streaking on the upper breast sides. The legs were pale, straw yellow, paler than those of the Definitive Alternate-plumaged RBGUs and similar to the color of the bird's bill.

After taking two pages of notes on the bird, I left to try to call a couple others in hopes that they could get there before sunset. I went to Joe Harrison's house to call (getting no one), and then Joe and I went back to Jim Hamm park. About 17:15, the bird left Jim Hamm Park (in Boulder Co.) and flew east to Union Reservoir (Weld Co.). We went to Union to try to refind it and, shortly after our arrival, did so. We saw it swimming and flying while we were at Union.

Similar species eliminated: Ring-billed Gull is eliminated by size (smaller than RBGU), bill size and pattern (shorter, thinner, insubstantial ring), mantle color (too dark and blue), and head pattern (too heavily streaked), and tail pattern (Basic II RBGU would not show such a wide tail band). Common Gull (*L.c. canus* and *heinei*) probably eliminated by mantle color (should be more similar to that of RBGU) and tail pattern (again, should be more similar to that of similarly-aged RBGU). Kamchatka Gull (*L.c. kamschatkensis*) not certainly eliminated. Black-legged Kittiwake eliminated by head pattern (should be white), mantle color (slightly paler), tail pattern (should be mostly white in Basic II), and bill pattern (should be unmarked). Red-legged Kittiwake eliminated by leg length (should be shorter than our bird showed), head pattern and tail pattern (both should be white), and bill pattern (should be unmarked).

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** No vocalizations heard.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen 100s of Mew Gulls, with the vast majority of those very recently (Dec. 1998) in northern CA. I have seen uncountable bazillions of RBGUs. I have not seen any other form of what currently constitutes Mew [Common] Gull. I have seen 100s of Black-legged Kittiwakes and no Red-legged Kittiwakes.

**Light conditions:** sun behind me and to my left, though close to setting

**Optical equipment used:** Kowa 30x and Zeiss 7x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest approach of about 75 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Doug Faulkner and, after I went and got him, Joe Harrison

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** unknown, at the time of this writing

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** Canon rig with 420 mm lens setup and Kodak Lumiere 100 film, pushed to 200 ISO

**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:** 

**Address:** Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 28 February 1999 from notes written while studying the bird