

1999 - 58

Species reported: Mew Gull - adult basic plumage

Rcd 1/12/00 wpl
(VIDEO)

Number of individuals: one

Location: Cherry Creek Reservoir

Date of sighting: 11/20/99

Time: 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Reporting observer: John W. Vanderpoel
7583 Estate Circle
Niwot, CO 80503

Other observers: Sharon Dooley & Peter Gent

Light and weather conditions: Partly sunny and warm in the high 50's; gentle wind out of the west. The sunlight was not terribly harsh.

Optical Equipment: Zeiss 10 X 40B, , JVC Video camera

Distance to bird: ranged from 30 feet to 75 yards. The bird was walking on the swim beach right in among the 50+ Ring-bills and 40+ California Gulls. this presented a great opportunity to carefully observe and video comparisons.

Description:

size - very slightly smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls it was with.

head - rounder than most of the Ring-billeds. The head was white but streaked/mottled some what with a tan. The eye color was a mid-brown color, perhaps lighter than California, but obviously darker than the straw yellow eye of adult Ring-billed Gull.

bill - Structurally the bill was considerably thinner than the blunt tipped bill of the surrounding Ring-billed Gulls. It was also shorter and particularly noticeable was the slight decurvature of the bill. The color was a dull yellow with perhaps a little dusky on the tip, but no black marks of any kind.

legs - the legs were greenish yellow, though more yellow than the surrounding California Gulls.

chest and belly -

wing shape - I never was able to get a close look in flight, but while at rest two field marks helped distinguish this individual from the surrounding RBG's. The

ACCEPT 7-0

white primary tips were slightly boulder than the adult Ring-bills that were near. When swimming in the water, this Mew Gull would crisscross the folded primaries and hold higher than any of the surrounding RBG's (see video)

tail - The tail was white.

mantle - The mantle was about the same darkness as the adult California Gulls, thus several shades darker than the Ring-billed Gulls.

Voice: N/A

Previous Experience: I've seen and filmed perhaps two thousand Mew Gulls of all ages.

Identification Aids: (list of books, illustrations, video or other birders consulted in identification)

at time of observation - none

after observation - none

Conclusion: The bird was an adult basic Mew Gull of the sub species *brachyrhynchus*. The structure of the bill alone on this individual rules out Ring-billed Gull, though obviously the darker mantle and prominent tertial and scapular crescent also rule that species out. The overall size and the bill size and shape helped rule out the similar California Gull. Even the smallest (runt) California Gulls are Ring-billed sized or larger. I ruled out the nominate subspecies *canus canus* by the small size of the bill and the fact that the bill was not marked with any black. The bill was also too small to fit for the asian subspecies *kamtchatschenis*.

I have included some video tape of both this individual and the Mew Gull seen at Union reservoir on Nov. 18, 1999.

Red 11/30/99 wpl

CFO-RC FILE # 1999-58

RESULTS: ACCEPT 7-0

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWINGS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NECESSARY)

SPECIES: MEW GULL (Common Name) LARUS CANUS (Scientific Name)

DATE(S) OF OBSERVATION: 20 NOVEMBER 1999

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: UNKNOWN PLUMAGE: ADULT BASIC (WINTER)

EXACT LOCATION: THE SWIM BEACH AT CHERRY CREEK RESERVOIR

COUNTY: ARAPAHOE NEAREST TOWN: AURORA ELEVATION: 5000'

LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 1 HOUR TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 1pm - 3pm

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW THE BIRD(S) WITH YOU:

JOHN VANDERPOEL, SITARON DOOLEY

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S):

LIGHT CONDITIONS (QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION):

SUNSHINE

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED:

10x BINOCULARS, 20-60x TELESCOPE

DISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): 30 m (CLOSEST)

WAS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? YES IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS?

WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? JOHN VANDERPOEL VIDEOED IT

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED:

STANDING ON A SANDY BEACH, OR IN SHALLOW WATER JUST OFFSHORE.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

MOSTLY STANDING ON BEACH, OCCASIONALLY IN WATER GOING AFTER BREAD.

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 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 OF FIELD NOTES):

THE BIRD WAS A SMALLISH GULL, A LITTLE SMALLER THAN RING-BILLED GULLS AND MUCH SMALLER THAN THE CALIFORNIA GULLS IT WAS WITH. THE BIRD WAS IN WINTER PLUMAGE WITH A MOTTLED HEAD AND NECK, THE MANTLE COLOR WAS DARKER THAN RING-BILLED, SIMILAR TO THE COLOR OF ADULT CALIFORNIA GULLS. IT HAD DISTINCT WHITE CRESCENTS IN THE TERTIALS AND ABOVE THE TAIL WHEN STANDING - NEITHER RING BILLED NOR CALIFORNIA GULLS HAVE THESE MARKS. THE WING TIPS WERE BLACK WITH WHITE SPOTS AT REST. THE TAIL WAS WHITE. THE BILL WAS SMALL AND AN OFF YELLOW COLOR, AND HAD NO BLACK OR RED MARKS

DESCRIBE BIRD'S CALL OR SONG: ON IT. IT WAS NOTICEABLY THINNER AND SMALLER THAN A RING-BILLED BILL. THE EYE WAS BLACK AND THE LEGS WERE YELLOW. I SHOULD HAVE WATCHED IT FLYING MORE, BUT DIDN'T.

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM: RING-BILLED GULL - SIZE, MANTLE COLOR, BILL SIZE AND NO MARKS, TERTIAL AND ABOVE TAIL CRESCENTS.

CALIFORNIA GULL - SIZE (VERY DIFFERENT), BILL SIZE AND MARKINGS, CRESCENTS.

BOVAPARTE'S GULL - SIZE, MANTLE COLOR, WING PATTERN, HEAD PATTERN, LEG COLOR.
FRANKLIN'S GULL - SIZE, HEAD PATTERN, BILL COLOR, LEG COLOR.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES? HAVE SEEN MEX GULL MANY TIMES ON THE WEST COAST AND IN EUROPE.

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE AT TIME OF OBSERVATION

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING _____ OR AFTER OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY _____.

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: 11/25/99

REPORTING OBSERVER: PETER R. GENT SIGNATURE: Peter R. Gent

OBSERVER ADDRESS: 55 S 35th St
BOULDER
CO 80303

SEND REPORT TO:
COLORADO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
c/o BILL LISOWSKY
2919 SILVERPLUME DR.
FT. COLLINS, CO 80526

Rcd 12/4/99 wpl

CFO-RC FILE#: 1999-58
RESULTS: ACCEPT 7-0

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

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

Species: Mew Gull (Common Name) Larus canus (Scientific Name)

Date(s) of observation: November 20, 1999

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: Unknown Plumage: winter adult

Exact location: Cherry Creek Reservoir on the swim beach

County: Arapahoe Nearest town: Aurora Elevation: Unknown

Length of observation: 1 hour Times(s) of observation: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: John Vanderpoel, Peter Gent

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): _____

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird's; position): excellent light, partly cloudy, about 50°

Optical equipment used: LEICA 10X42 BA

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): 100 ft to as close as 15 feet

Was bird photographed?: YES - VIDEO If so, have you submitted photographs? No

Who took the photographs? John Vanderpoel - VIDEO

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: The swim beach is a fairly wide sandy shore on the reservoir.

Describe the bird's behavior (flying; feeding; habits; behaviors used in identifying the species or in supporting the identification): The bird was resting and standing on the shore, sometimes preening. It did fly once with the large flock of Ring-billed Gulls and California Gulls but I didn't see it.

Describe the bird(s) in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include overall size and shape, and how you placed the bird(s) 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. Describe other 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 of field notes):

See attached sheet.

Describe bird's call or song:

NONE

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them:

See attached sheet.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

Not much. I don't ignore gulls but my main experience with gulls has been with John Vanderpoel.

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation):

Nation Geographic Society Field Guide - 2nd Ed.

This report was made from notes made during _____ or after immediately observation, or later from memory _____.

Date of written report: 12/1/99

Reporting observer: Dooly Signature: Sharon A. Dooly

Observer's address: 4441 Driftwood Place, Boulder 80301

Send report to: Bill Lisowsky, 2919 Silverplume Drive, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526

**Description of adult winter Mew Gull seen November 20, 1999 by Dooley,
Vanderpoel and Gent**

I had been helping John film Ring-billed and California Gulls for a couple of days and while the Mew Gull at first looked similar to Ring-billed, I was able to observe that the bird had several features different from the Ring-billeds and Californias that we had been filming. When we first saw the bird, standing on the shore, mixed in with Ring-billed Gulls, I noticed that the bird was very slightly smaller than the Ring-billeds. Later, while we observed it, it was next to a couple of California Gulls and it was much smaller than they were. Its head appeared rounder than the Ring-billeds with a small amount of brownish-tan streaking. One of the features that really stood out for me was how different its bill was from the Ring-billeds. The bill was a different shape: short, thin and decurved and it was yellow with only a very slight amount of duskiness on the tip. The bird also had a very dark eye. The mantle was darker than the Ring-billeds but not the same color as the California Gulls' mantles. Two other features that were especially notable to me were the pronounced white crescents on the scapulars and on the tertials. These crescents strongly contrasted with the gray mantle and were very obvious. I could quickly pick it out of the group of Ring-billeds by just looking for the crescents. The wing tips had broad white primary tips. I did not see the bird while it was flying and I am ashamed to admit I couldn't remember what color its legs were.

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 1999-58

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X

ACCEPT 7-0

Red 1/5/00 wpl

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

Date: 21 November 1999 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** ? **Plumage:** Def. Basic

Locality: Cherry Creek Res. **Elevation:** about 5350'

Nearest town: Aurora **County:** Arapahoe

Time observed: about 09:00 - 09:30 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 Cherry Creek Reservoir to look for the Mew Gull that John Vanderpoel had found there on the 20th. We found it pretty quickly in a flock of Ring-billed (RBGU) and California gulls (CAGU) in the water off the swim beach on the NE corner of the reservoir.

The bird was a smallish gull, smaller than the nearby RBGUs, and considerably smaller than the nearby CAGUs. It was obviously a full adult, with no suggestion of immaturity (e.g., dark markings on tertials, rectrices, or primary coverts; primary-tip pattern was adult-like). The head and neck were extensively streaked with brown, with the nape being darker and more heavily-streaked than the rest of the head. This bird was not as heavily-streaked on the head as was the bird that I had seen the evening before at Union Res. The eyes were dark and the bill was an unmarked, pale greenish-yellow. Compared to that of the RBGUs, the bill was shorter and thinner. The mantle was obviously a shade or two darker gray than the mantle color of the nearby RBGUs, and was similar in color and tone to that of the nearby CAGUs. The bird had an obvious and well-defined white scapular crescent, much more obvious than that of any of the nearby RBGUs. The tertials were the same color as the mantle and had large, well-defined white tips forming large tertial crescents, very much larger and more noticeable than those of RBGUs. The upper wing coverts were the same color and tone as was the mantle. The bird had very long wings and the black primaries had obvious white tips (except for P10). The underparts and tail were white. The legs were pale, yellow.

P10 had a large white mirror that isolated the black feather tip from the rest of the black on the feather. I believe that this bird had a larger P10 mirror than did the bird I saw the evening before at Union Res. Each of the primaries 5-8 had white tips, subterminal black straps, and large, white tongues. This created a wingtip pattern that showed a minimal amount of black and with the P5-8 tongues and the P9-10 mirrors just about bisecting the black.

Similar species eliminated: Ring-billed Gull is eliminated by size, bill size and pattern, mantle color, head pattern, and wingtip pattern. California Gull eliminated by size and bill and wingtip patterns. Common Gull (*L.c. canus* and *L.c. heinei*) probably eliminated by mantle color, but definitely by wingtip pattern (there is no white P8 tongue in these forms, thus the black on the wingtip is more extensive). Kamchatka Gull (*L.c. kamschatkensis*) also eliminated on wingtip pattern. Black-legged Kittiwake eliminated by head and wingtip patterns. Red-legged Kittiwake eliminated by leg length and color, head pattern, and wingtip pattern.

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 many 100s of Mew Gulls, with the vast majority of those very recently (Dec. 1998 in northern CA and August and September 1999 in AK). I have seen uncountable bazillions of RBGUs. I have not seen any other form of what currently constitutes Mew [Common] Gull. I have seen 1000s of Black-legged Kittiwakes and no Red-legged Kittiwakes.

Light conditions: sun behind me

Optical equipment used: Leica 32x and Zeiss 7x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest approach of about 35 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Doug Faulkner

Other observers who saw the bird independently: John Vanderpoel, Peter Gent, and Sharon Dooley (on 20 November 1999)

If photographed, type of equipment and film: did not photograph

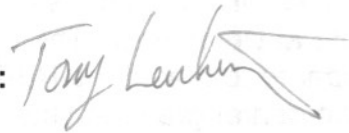
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Picadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: Written on 28 November 1999 from notes written on the evening of 21 November 1999.