

Species reported: Mew Gull- 1st basic plumage

Red 1/12/00 wpl

Number of individuals: one

ACCEPT 7-0

Location: Union Reservoir-northwest end

Barr Lake, SW of Ft Lupton

Date of sighting: 12/31/99

Time: 9:00 AM - 9:20 AM

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

Other observers: Bill Kaempfer, Gary Mathews, Tony Leukering and others.

Light and weather conditions: Partly cloudy/high cloud ceiling with excellent visibility and warm in the 50's; Light winds out of the west..

Optical Equipment: Zeiss 10 X 40B, Kowa Telescope

Distance to bird: range 85 yards. The bird was walking in a wetland among approximately 300 Ring-billed Gulls. There were at least five 1st basic RBG's near it for comparison.

Description:

size - This individual was smaller than many Mews I've seen; around 90% of the size of the surrounding Ring-billed Gulls.

general appearance- What initially drew attention to this individual was the uniformly brown appearance of the coverts, tertials and wingtips. This immediately distinguished it from the RBG's (even the 1st basic birds) which are predominantly gray, black and white.

head - rounder than most of the Ring-billeds. There was a wash/streaking on the head, but it was distinctly paler than the rest of the upper parts. The eye appeared large and dark; this created an impression that really stood out as being different than the RBG's.

bill - Structurally the bill was considerably thinner and somewhat shorter than the bills of the surrounding Ring-billed Gulls. The color was dark at the tip and blended towards a pale base; but the separation was not sharply demarcated.

legs - darkish gray

chest and belly - The chest was lighter than the flanks and the belly was brownish

coverts - the greater coverts, scapulars and median coverts were brownish not grayish.

tertials - the tertials were a mid brown, lighter than the tertials of the 1st basic RBG's that it was near. They were broadly tipped with pale buff.

tail - not visible.

folded primaries - were dark brown and narrowly edged with a paler chevron.

mantle - The mantle was gray, but the rest of the upperparts were a mid brown color. The gray was not prominent, but appeared slightly darker than the gray upper surfaces of the surrounding RBG's.

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 -

Conclusion: The bird was a 1st basic Mew Gull of the sub species *brachyrhynchus*. it was noticeably smaller than a Ring-billed Gull. It was also much more uniformly brown (as a result of the brown scapulars, all the coverts, tertials and belly) above than a 1st basic RBG. The structure of the bill as well as the diffused color also helped distinguish this individual from a 1st basic Ring-billed Gull. The small overall size and the bill size and shape helped rule out any of the larger gulls.