

MEW GULL

Larus canus

1 Definitive basic (adult winter)

March 5 and March 10, 2001

Jim Hamm Park east of Longmont, Boulder County

Times: 3/5 - 11:10 - 11:50 am ; 3/10 - 11:30 am to noon.

Other observers with me: Peter Gent, Norm Erthal, Andrew Spencer (3/10).

Other observers independently: John Vanderpoel (reported gull to RBA 3/4/01).

Light conditions: <sup>3/10</sup> full overcast, snowing, breezy. Good lighting for determining depth of gray tones on uppers. (Sunny day 3/5/01)

Optics: Kowa TSN-4 scope plus other scopes and bins.

Distance: 50 yds.? est.

3/5: Behavior: Seen on small island in middle of small pond at Jim Hamm Park. Island crowded with California and Ring-billed Gulls. Awake, looking about for only few second intervals, several times. Stood 1 time, briefly, took few steps with noticeable limp. [Note: last year (late Feb./early March 2000) a 2nd basic Mew Gull with a limp was also seen at Jim Hamm. Speculation is that this is the same bird!] Also sleeping.

Description: Size similar to Ring-billed Gull with more petite, rounded head.

Uppers: Darker gray than that of 2 dozen RBGU's sharing island with Mew Gull. Thin scapular crescent and prominent tertial crescent observed.

Head: white with heavy chocolate/gray mottling throughout, extending well down nape and hind neck and sides of neck to near shoulder. (Very much like adult CAGU in early/mid-winter.) RBGU's on island were well into alternate head molt. (Many CAGU's this time of year also look white headed.) Bill - petite, thin, all pale yellow. Once I thought I saw a tiny dark smudge near tip. (On 3/10, an overcast, snowing day, 2 of us thought we saw a tiny faint reddish mark.) Eye - dark.

Wings: Primaries black with white tips. Large mirror on P10 seen on underside of sleeping gull's wing. At least 3 primary tips extended beyond tail.

Unders: All white. Legs pale yellow, medium length.

No vocalization.

Similar species: Adult winter California Gull very similarly plumaged. Interestingly, on 3/10, the report from birders at the park when I arrived was that the Mew Gull wasn't there, only a "California Gull". After setting up our scopes and scrutinizing the gull in question, we concluded that the gull was indeed a Mew Gull and marveled at how easily a winter adult MewGull could be overlooked.

California Gull is larger in size; bill longer and heavier, usually marked with red and black; P10 mirror is smaller.

Ring-billed Gull Def. Basic upperparts are paler gray, eye yellow, bill ringed in black. Scapular and tertial crescents minimal.

Lesser Black-backed Gull is larger in size, forehead more sloped. Mantle darker gray than Mew Gull. Bill heavier, marked with red. P10 mirror smaller, eye yellow.

Report written from notes made during observation. March 11, 2001

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