

DOCUMENTATION --
RARE BIRD SIGHTING

1978-02 MOUNTAIN WEST REGION
AMERICAN BIRDS

Species: Great Black-backed Gull
(Vernacular name)

Larus marinus
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 24 February 1978 Time Bird Seen: 0750 to 0830

Locality: Utah, Great Salt Lake, from western dike of Farmington Bay
Wildlife Refuge, Farmington
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Binoculars, Leitz Trinovid, 6x24

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used:

Number of birds seen: One (1) Sex: Unknown Plumage: Immature

Light conditions: Excellent, rising sun behind my back

Distance from bird, and how measured: approximately 45 feet, estimated

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

Feeding on dead fish on a sandbar. Periodically would drive away Herring Gulls attempting to share a large fish.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

On a sandbar extending into Great Salt Lake from a dike
(Man made).

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

None

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

Size: Larger than adjacent Herring Gulls, definitely larger than 4 Ring-billed Gulls nearby.

Shape: similar to Herring Gull and Ring-billed Gull

Plumage: White around head and belly, mottled dark over back and wings, primaries-black, secondaries, black, edged white on trailing edge, wing and over back, mottled brown/white

Bill: Huge; black tipped and slight greenish towards base

Tail: mottled brown, merging into band of black and white band on outer edge

Eye: appeared quite dark

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery--i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

None

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Herring Gull: was larger and had white outer tail band, more white around head, much larger bill

Ring-billed Gull; much larger,

California Gull: much larger, bill too big

Western Gull: size still too big (not familiar enough with immatures)

Prior experience with this and similar species:

On Great Lakes, Buffalo, New York, Niagara River, Lakes Erie and Ontario, Erie, Pennsylvania harbor, many years

This report was written from notes made during x after ___ observation; from memory___.

NAME (print): Winston William Brockner

Mailing address: 5965 South Herzman Drive, Evergreen, Colorado 80439

Signature: W. W. Brockner

Return to:

Hugh E. Kingery

869 Milwaukee Street

Denver, Colorado 80206