

19-1986

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Re: Two sightings of Sabine's Gull, Sept. 1986, one in each of your regions.

Dear Editors,

While traveling through your areas this fall I was pleased to have two sightings of juvenile Sabine's Gull. These are both essentially single observer sightings (except as noted), but I feel confident of their accuracy and thought the regional editors should know about them. Since the more southerly bird was seen first, two birds are certainly involved. Perhaps there was a small "flight" of Sabine's Gulls during this period and this will help to corroborate any other reports you might receive. Full details follow.

I: Observers: Michael C. Noland, M. Patricia Noland

Date: 9-9-86

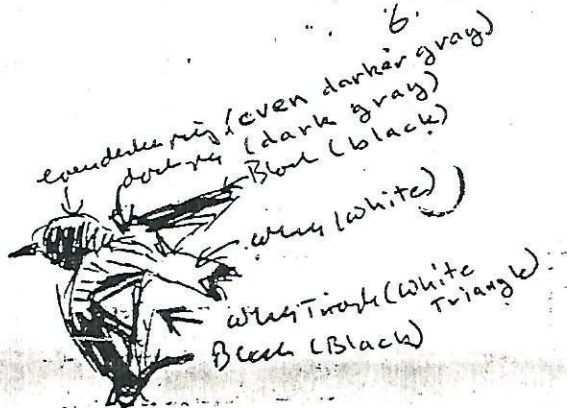
Time: Mid-afternoon (perhaps 2:30 p.m. \pm 1 hour).

Place: Southwest shore of Bear Lake, from SR 30 just north of Laketown, Rich County, Utah.

Weather: A cold front was moving through the area during the day with strong northerly (northwest?) winds. Adjacent southwest Wyoming had heavy thunderstorms and traveler's advisories for the mountains.

Observation: I was just pulling out from the first lakeside parking area north of Laketown when a small gull-sized bird with a strikingly black and white pattern flew by. It was beating rapidly, traveling north to south (the strong wind behind it), parallel to the lakeshore, only some tens of yards offshore. I pulled back into the parking area, got out of the car, and relocated the bird through 10x40 binoculars. By the time I did, it was quickly disappearing to the south, but I did note the following: Size, shape, actions: A small Bonaparte's sized gull with rather tern like wing shape and actions. Head. Seen only briefly from above and behind, but no obvious

most of my observations it was flying rapidly back and forth over the eastern end of the lake below my viewpoint. It alighted on the lake briefly on a few occasions. Once it soared up high and away, causing me to lose it, but it eventually returned to the same area. Wings and mantle. The outer primaries were black all the way from the wingtips to the carpal joint. The upper wing coverts and mantle appeared to be uniformly dark gray, with no carpal bar or any other obvious markings. Clean white triangles were located on the trailing half of the wings in the secondary, inner primary area. Head. The top and sides of the head appeared slightly darker than the mantle, giving the impression of a hood when viewed from the side (but not a distinct black hood). No black collar, ear spot, or any other distinct markings were seen, only the slightly darker hooded effect. Tail. White, contrasting noticeably with darker mantle, and with narrow, clean cut black terminal band, which made it easy to see that the tail was definitely forked. Bill. Unable to see anything about it from my distance, though I looked hard. It just seemed dark. Underparts. Unfortunately I failed to note anything in particular about underparts or underwings, though I did have some opportunities to do so. Sitting. When on the water the bird looked very dark with no obvious white areas showing. Sketch: I include a copy of a very crude sketch I made later that evening from memory (I have added a translation of my original scribbled notes).



Similar: None, given the excellent views. No other gull has the clean cut black, gray and white wing pattern of this species. Although the mantle color of juvenile Sabine's Gull is supposed to be more of a gray brown, I do not feel my perception of it as dark gray is in conflict with this, given the distance of the bird and less than optimal weather and lighting conditions.

Conclusion: The bird was a juvenile Sabine's Gull.

I hope these observations are of some use to you.

Good Birding!

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