

1-1998

To: Utah Records Committee & Terry Sadler
The following report, including 2 photographs, submitted by
Keith Evans, (801) 476-0232 or KEE0440@aol.com.

Report of Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) at Bear River
Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder County, Utah on March 16,
1998. Observed by: Keith Evans, John Bellmon, and Jack
Rensel.

Keith, John, and Jack arrived at the southwest corner
of the Bear River Refuge auto tour at about 3:00pm on
Monday, March 16, 1998. An Iceland Gull had been reported
on the Utah hotline. Keith observed the bird with Arnold
Smith on March 13, observed and photographed the bird on
March 16 with John Bellmon and Jack Rensel, observed and
photographed the bird again on March 19 with Dennis and Lee
Shirley, and observed the bird on March 21 with the Wasatch
Audubon field trip participants. On March 13 there was
another gull present with whiter primaries and whiter head
-- on the spot identification called this bird a Glaucous-
winged Gull. There was also a second-winter Glaucous Gull
at the site for comparisons on several occasions. This
report documents the March 16 observation and provides
photographs.

Keith, John, and Jack observed the bird for more than
an hour using 3 spotting scopes and 6 different bird
identification guide books. The overall coloration, dark
bill, and pink legs allowed us to quickly narrow the
identification down to a first-winter Herring Gull, Iceland
Gull, Thayer's Gull, or Glaucous-winged Gull. A first-
winter Thayer's was present on the March 13, 19, and 21
observations by Keith Evans.

Keith, John, and Jack noted the similarities between a
pale first-winter Thayer's and a dark first-winter Iceland.
We used the following characteristics to separate the two.
First, the feeding behavior as the Thayer's was flying and
diving to catch fish or feeding on some carrion (carp) in
the area. The Iceland was standing on the bank catching
and swallowing whole, small fish with a technique more
resembling an egret or heron. The Iceland Gull was very
effective in catching small fish -- catching and eating a
fish about every 3-5 minutes when actively feeding.
Second, the bill appeared even smaller than a Thayer's,
very pointed, and very thin from side to side. Third, the
primary feathers were not darker than the mantle on the
Iceland Gull (see photo of flying bird as in some lighting
conditions and with the primary feathers "stacked" while

sitting, the color appeared a little darker) -- the primaries were definitely darker than the mantle on the Thayer's Gull in the area. Fourth, the tail lacked the dark band normally found in Thayer's. The tail on the Iceland was pale, with hints of mottling, and a white tip. The middle of the tail did have an indefinite band (dirty), but the outside retrices were spotted.

We're sure several photos of the bird sitting on the bank will be available for the Records Committee's consideration. The enclosed photos of the bird in flight will add a different perspective. I, Keith Evans, judge this bird to be an Iceland Gull, or possibly a Iceland/Thayer's hybrid. I base this on overall characteristics plus the following: (1) the translucence of the primary feathers (see photo), as mentioned in several guide books describing the Iceland Gull; (2) the underside of the primaries were much lighter than the underside of the rest of the wing -- the underside of the wing should be one-toned in the Thayer's; (3) the degree of paleness and mottling on the tail; (4) the overall shape and size of the bird was just slightly larger than a California Gull; and (5) the egret-like feeding behavior of catching and swallowing whole live fish.

Keith Evans