

23-1991
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VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: Mew Gull Scientific Name: *Larus canus*
Date: Oct. 8, 1991 Time: 1:30 pm Length of time observed: 30-40 minutes
Number: 1 Age: Juvenile to First Winter Sex: ?
Location: Logan Sewage Ponds
Latilong: 3 Elevation (if known): 4400
Distance to bird: 40-50 meters Light conditions: Sunny, light overcast; excellent
Optical equipment: Bushnell 9X36 binoculars, Questar spotting scope (40+60x)
Weather: Warm (70's), mostly sunny with few light clouds
Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

This bird was a medium to small sized gull. It was picked out of a mixed flock of Ring-billed and California Gulls (with 3 Franklin Gulls) by being slightly smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls and having a "petite" appearance. The bill was much narrower than those of the Ring-billed Gulls and noticeably less blunt. The base was yellowish and graded quickly into black. The legs were pinkish. The head was whitish streaked finely with brown grading into mostly brown through the lower breast and belly. The back was mottled brown. The tertials, scapulars, and secondaries were also mottled brown. The primaries were nearly black (very dark brown) with no indication of white. This plumage indicated that the bird was a juvenile with a possible start of molting to first winter due to the light head and upper neck.

The tail was not observed by this observer, but 2 other observers (Keith Archibald & Bob Atwood) later saw the bird and observed a mostly dark tail, unlike the banded tail of young ring-billed gulls.

The head shape of this gull was very rounded, almost Kittiwake in appearance (but with a finer longer bill). The eye was noticeably larger in relation to the head than that of the Ring-billed Gulls.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery: None

Behavior: The bird sat during the entire observation period. Much of the time it was gular fluttering. It was more nervous than the other gulls. It flew at the end of the observation period but could not be picked out of the flying gulls.

Habitat: Sewage pond. Sat on dike.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated:

The only other species of this size that is similar is juvenile Ring-billed Gull. The presence of several juvenile-first winter Ring-bills allowed for excellent comparative views. This gull had a more rounded head, much finer bill. The bill was shorter and less thick than that of first winter Ring-billed Gulls. The plumage of this bird was noticeably different with a browner belly and back. The tail, as seen by Keith Archibald & Bob Attwood was nearly all dark in contrast to the banded tails of the Ring-bills. In addition, this bird was smaller. The eye was larger than those of all nearby Ring-billed Gulls.

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

I have seen a few Mew Gulls on the west coast and saw 100's of the conspecific Euroasian Common Gull this summer in Norway & Sweden. I have seen 1000's of Ring-billed Gulls.

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of N.A., Peterson's western Field Guide were consulted in the field and Gulls, a guide to identification by P.J Grant was consulted later.

Significance of record in this area or the state:

First latilong 3 and Cache Valley Record. Possibly first or earliest fall record.

Additional material: (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available)

2 slides enclosed

Description from notes taken at time of sighting X notes made later from memory

Observer: Ronald J. Byel

Signature:

Address: 825 N. 600 E.
Logan, UT 84321

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Larry Byel (with me)

Keith Archibald } saw bird 2 hours later
Bob Attwood }

Date prepared: 9-Oct-1991

Return this form to: Ella Sorensen
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