

Iceland Gull
22 Dec 1985
Davenport, Scott Co., IA
*M.L. & *P. Petersen, *Ann Barker
IBL 56:44; 57:77

Record Number: 85-23
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Mary Lou Petersen
Ann Barker
Peter C. Petersen
Bill Barker

LETTERS

Tom Kent to Pete Petersen, 12 June 1986
Tom Kent to Bruce Peterjohn, 4 Aug 1986
Bruce Peterjohn to Tom Kent, 22 Aug 1986, 6 Oct 1986
Tom Kent to Fritz Scheider, 9 Oct 1986
Fritz Scheider to Tom Kent, 26 Oct 1986

REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 56:44, Ill Birds & Birding 2:30-31, Am. Birds 40:1050.

Records Committee: IBL 57:77

VOTE: 3-III, 2-IV, 1-V, 1-abstain

V, The body color sounds like a first winter bird ("creamy white", "white with very pale tan mottling", "all white or buffy white"); neither documentation deals with the age of the bird (such as graying of mantle, white tip to black-tipped bill). If a first year bird, it must be a Glaucous based on bill and body color. The only features that favor Iceland are size and wing length, both very subjective marks that I have misjudged this year on another Glaucous Gull. The documentations indicate that three white-winged gulls were present; the Davenport CBC reports three Glaucous and one Iceland. I saw three first year Glaucous Gulls there the next morning, carefully studied at three different times over 3 1/2 hours. One was smaller, smaller headed and billed, and lighter, but still larger than Herrings. This was likely a female. P. Petersen identified this bird as the Iceland while I was with him.

IV, The Petersen documentation does not eliminate Glaucous Gull, being based mainly upon overlap of primaries beyond retrices. To accurately identify and document a species such as this would require much more evidence than what is given. The description by the Barkers appears to be a description of another bird completely. Coloration, size comparison is described much better in this documentation but the fact that they went to this spot expecting an Iceland Gull does tend to bias any description given. I don't know experience of any of the observers with Iceland Gull. The identification could most probably be correct as Iceland Gull but I have reservations about their combined description of this bird (or birds).

IV, Because of the close proximity and descriptions of the two Iceland sightings, I am treating the 12-22-85 and the 12-27-85 birds as one. The descriptions do somewhat fit a 2nd winter Iceland Gull. More information, however, is needed to rule out

possibility of small glaucous or even Thayer's gull. Details such as bill shape and more precise comparison of wing length (at rest) would have been helpful. I believe a Kumlein's Iceland should have shown some darker areas in primaries (not wholly white).

abstain, also seen 12/23 same loc. Bill Barker.

III, (Note: documentation is by Mary Lou Petersen). [This doc. form should be destroyed--there is no space for elimination of similar species.] No description of primaries. Color and wing length seem to eliminate Glaucous and Herring. Color also poss. eliminates Thayer's. Barker's comparison of head shape is good and description of primaries as "white" would make Thayer's less likely. While sketchy, this documentation is OK to me.

III, Separating small Glaucous from large Iceland is a problem. Not much written here can do that. However, Iceland Gulls in the same state of molt have longer wings that extend further beyond the tail tip than do the Glaucous's wings. Since the birds were compared with Glaucous and the wings are said to be longer, this description strongly suggests Iceland Gull.

Iceland Gull

22 Dec 1985

Davenport, Scott Co., IA

*Mary Lou Petersen, *Ann Barker *P. Pete

second review on this memo; 3

Record Number: 85-23

Classification: *NA

REREVIEW with documentation from Pete Petersen and note from Bill Barker and outside review by Peterjohn, Eckert, Scheider, and Stroyls.

REVOTE: 3-II, 2-IV, 1-V, 1-not received.

'V, This species is very difficult to conclusively identify. I have vacillated several times between acceptance and non-acceptance. In the end, after doing much study of references and reexamining the evidence at hand, I feel this record is quite possibly correct. However, I don't feel comfortable adding a bird to the state list on the basis that it is probably correct. I believe the evidence must be conclusive. The differences between Iceland, Glaucous, and even Thayer's are very subtle. In fact, this group is so tricky that a higher level of evidence is almost mandatory. These are birds that must be described in great detail and photographed, if possible, before we will be in a position to properly judge the merits of a record. A Class V vote means "A possibly accurate record, but one for which there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement." (Iowa Birds, p. 11). This is exactly how I feel. Many of the details are highly suggestive of Iceland Gull. However, most of the ID hinges upon a comparison with Herring and Glaucous. Apparently this was available but the descriptions are simply not detailed enough to convey what the observers actually saw of these very subtle features in a group of extremely variable species. The details of identification are too extensive to discuss here. I suggest we have an in-depth discussion in person to share our knowledge and help one another. Having never seen an Iceland Gull, I certainly have a lot to learn. At this point, however, I still have a reasonable doubt which prevents me from accepting a new bird for the state list. Add to this a "split decision" from two excellent field observers, Peterjohn and Scheider, and I cast my vote as above.'

'IV, Although the descriptions seem to fit Iceland Gull, a combination of factors make the record unsatisfactory for me as a first state record: (1) The bird: The probability of seeing a bird with just these features may be about the same as seeing a small Glaucous Gull as outlined by Scheider; (2) The subjectivity of the features observed. The identification is almost entirely based on size and head shape. Judging this is difficult. The tendency to see what one expects to see is great; (3) The documentation. Only Martsching indicates the time he first made notes. Although P. Petersen says he was not influenced by Blevins, all other observers were likely influenced by the expectation of an Iceland Gull. No one used the official Iowa documentation form which asks for information concerning time of note taking. Apparently no attempt was made to photograph this bird or immediately notify others who could have photographed it. 'IV, The bird described very well could be an Iceland Gull, but I

am not completely convinced that the descriptions eliminate a small Glaucous Gull or hybrid of some type.'

'II, If we are indeed voting on identification on the basis of field marks given, the overwhelming evidence points to Iceland Gull. No evidence contradicts this conclusion. If, on the other hand, we take the ultraconservative stand that the bird was a leucistic this, a hybrid that, or a very small whatever, we are proposing the bird could not have been identified by anyone under any circumstances less being collected as a specimen. This may be true, however, we do have a preponderance of evidence suggesting Iceland Gull and no physical marks against it. It would be difficult to accumulate 100% positive ID information and no mental doubts for many species.'

'II, Hope Bruce has finally straightened you out, Tom. See Bird Watching, Dec 1968, p. 36-37 for a color photo of a bird in this plumage.'

'II, I am convinced this species occurs in Iowa at times, and see no reason to wait for a better documentation. Chances are beyond reasonable doubt that these birds were indeed Iceland Gulls.'

TABLE 9

- T = Thousand
 * = Documented
 x = Observed during count week, but not on count day
 ? = Supportive evidence inadequate or not submitted
 () = Counted as individuals, but not as species

Thousand																											
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Species	Adams	Alexander & Pulaski	Bureau	Carroll & Whiteside	Champaign	Clark	Cook (Chicago Lakefront)	Cook (Chicago Urban)	Cook & Du Page (Barrington)	Cook & Lake (Northshore)	Cook & Northern Indiana	De Kalb	Du Page & Cook (Lisle Arboretum)	Du Page & Kane	Jersey	Jersey & Calhoun	Lake	La Salle (Illini State Park)	La Salle (Starved Rock State Park)	Macon	Madison & St. Clair	Marion	Marshall	Mason & Case	Mason, Tazewell & Fulton	McHenry	
Pied-billed Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	
Double-crested Cormorant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Great Blue Heron	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	x	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	23	
Green-backed Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Tundra Swan	-	*2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Mute Swan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Greater White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Snow Goose (white form)	-	96	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	2	-	3	20	-	2502	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	
(blue form)	-	(30)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	-	(6530)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Brant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Canada Goose	15	74T	1001	-	-	-	-	45	3676	8059	29	-	413	10162	-	1661	721	1261	-	x	-	-	-	153	866	3263	110
Wood Duck	-	613	2	-	-	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	
Green-winged Teal	-	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
American Black Duck	-	133	2	13	-	-	-	43	56	15	6	-	101	11	-	54	10	113	-	56	-	-	-	133	40	69	12
Mallard	808	8957	200	135	3	-	-	1331	1212	2121	693	148	1862	1427	18	9506	891	605	-	438	103	-	-	4689	20349	194	983
Mallard x Black Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(4)	(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Northern Pintail	2	1654	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	2	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	12	1	
Blue-winged Teal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Northern Shoveler	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Gadwall	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	12	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	22	
American Wigeon	-	17	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4	
Canvasback	-	86	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	45	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	
Redhead	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	
Ring-necked Duck	-	118	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	12	1	
Greater Scaup	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Lesser Scaup	-	68	2	1	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	76	38	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	25	-	
scaup, species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Oldsquaw	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89	2	-	-	-	-	-	184	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Common Goldeneye	4	30	6	2	-	-	150	1882	-	464	177	-	2	106	-	46	366	1208	42	2	-	-	21	-	134	9	
Bufflehead	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	27	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Hooded Merganser	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	19	
Common Merganser	1	-	5	-	-	3	49	1	-	15	75	-	-	-	8	355	74	4383	3	-	-	-	4	-	595	-	
Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	2	-	64	99	-	-	-	-	-	65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
merganser, species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(15)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ruddy Duck	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
duck, species	-	-	-	-	-	(2)	-	-	(406)	-	-	-	(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Turkey Vulture	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Osprey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bald Eagle	18	70	7	39	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	17	95	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	27	26	46	
Northern Harrier	4	11	1	1	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	12	-	5	2	1	2	-	4	2	-	-	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	2	-	5	x	2	-	-	*2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Cooper's Hawk	-	3	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	1	*2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	
Northern Goshawk	-	*2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	*2	1	
accipiter, species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	(1)	-	-	-	1	-	(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	-	
Red-shouldered Hawk	-	18	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	1	1	-	*1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	1	1	-	
Red-tailed Hawk	31	80	25	22	11	36	-	5	41	36	48	2	40	31	1	60	24	8	10	11	18	11	44	42	22	41	
Rough-legged Hawk	6	4	6	4	6	3	-	-	4	10	3	7	7	13	-	5	7	8	9	-	-	-	1	9	28	21	8
Golden Eagle	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
American Kestrel	19	27	4	4	3	15	-	9	11	13	33	x	28	12	3	25	13	6	14	5	11	7	24	12	11	6	
Merlin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*1	
Peregrine Falcon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
hawk, species	(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	(1)	-	-	(3)	(1)	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2)	(1)
Gray Partridge	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ring-necked Pheasant	-	-	-	60	176	3	-	-	4	10	27	1	3	32	-	1	2	39	-	72	-	-	-	1	38	12	11
Ruffed Grouse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Wild Turkey	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Northern Bobwhite	30	22	-	5	-	21	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	54	-	-	5	5	-	29	44	43	-	
Virginia Rail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Sora	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
American Coot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	x	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	7	
Sandhill Crane	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Killdeer	1	31	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Common Snipe																											

Vol. 2, No. 2

Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri

ALTHOUGH NONE OF MINNESOTA'S 33 CBCs HAD TO CONTENT with extreme cold or blizzard conditions, the weather before and during the count period was sufficiently dismal to produce a mostly lackluster season. The extremes of cold and snow throughout most of November made it seem more like the depths of January before the winter even started, and it seemed unlikely for many late migrants to survive until the CBC season. By the time late December arrived, all locations reported at least a foot of snow on the ground, with a maximum of 24–30 inches. There were also a lot of below zero readings during the opening weekend of the period, though the coldest place, Cottonwood, had to endure nothing worse than a -18°F low. Relatively high winds were a problem on many CBCs, almost all locations were cloudy enough to shorten the already too-short birding day, and nearly half the counts were also hampered by light snow or sleet.

As expected, relatively few highlights emerged from Minnesota, as birds of all sorts, regulars and strays alike, were few and far between. The new Beltrami Island CBC, located in the depths of the boreal forest in extreme northern Minnesota, had a modest debut with only ten species and 67 individuals. Unless the area a birder covered had the benefit of a town and its cover and feeders, it was quite possible to drive around for an hour or more without seeing a single bird. (Perhaps this was partly responsible for the absence of the Grand Marais, Hutchinson and Sherburne Nat'l Wildlife Refuge CBCs.) Somehow, however, Rochester managed to match its species total of last year—60, an all-time CBC record. St. Paul Northeast was a distant second with 50, about average for them, while Duluth slipped badly to 47 species, ten fewer than last year, and finished an even more distant third.

Probably the best bird seen was the Pine Warbler visiting an Austin feeder; it eventually survived into February, making this the first Minnesota winter record of a warbler other than Yellow-rumped. I was equally impressed with the 11,161 Snow Buntings at Baudette—although not an all-time CBC record, this had to be the largest number ever in this state by a wide margin. Duluth's best birds were a Northern Saw-whet Owl (one of a half-dozen records here during the winter, zero being the normal total) and an adult Peregrine Falcon surviving quite well on the harbor's supply of pigeons. An immature Peregrine, possibly the same bird, had overwintered here the previous year, and may well have been one of five hacked out of a site about 100 miles away in Cook County in 1984. First-place Rochester's best finds were Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. A Song Sparrow was impressively far north at Isabella, but that's about the extent of it as far as rarities go.

Also worthy of note were Merlins on two CBCs; although considered quite casual in Minnesota in winter a few years ago, this raptor is now an annual CBC find, usually and curiously at northern locales. Heavy snow cover coupled with low small mammal populations resulted in some owls being forced into towns and backyards in search of prey. Besides the Northern Saw-whet in Duluth, others were found at Warren and Rochester, while Great Horned and Barred owls were more conspicuous (ten Barreds—silent here in winter—at Rochester were especially noteworthy). Northern Shrikes also had trouble finding mice and were forced into towns and feeders to prey on birds, and thus were well represented on CBCs: note the 11 at Duluth and the no fewer than 15 at Rochester. Black-backed and Three-

toed woodpeckers staged their best invasion ever during the fall and winter in the state, but CBC coverage was minimal in bogs likely to harbor them for the season. Still, six Three-toeds were recorded on three counts (zero in normal most CBC seasons), including three at Beltrami Island.

The winter finch picture was mixed. Red Crossbills appeared on only four CBCs (the high count was a mere nine); White-winged Goldfinches were seen at four locations, with no one finding more than five. Purple Finches and Pine Siskins were also poorly represented overall. Evening Grosbeaks were generally scarce in the north, as numbers in the southern part of the state were quite good—an early and large exodus had been noted from northern Minnesota during the fall. Both Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls were well represented on southern CBCs, although northern locales only managed normal numbers; Pine Grosbeaks were especially evident in the Twin Cities, and five made it as far as Rochester.

Inevitable and and unfortunate was the assortment of undocumented and poorly described rarities. It was an easy decision to delete the following: Blue-winged Teal at Mountain Lake-Windom (the documentation essentially said no more than the bird was a duck), a Golden Eagle at Beltrami Island (no details), the magpie at Owatonna (no details), Loggerhead Shrike at Fergus Falls (no details), and the Brewer's Blackbirds at Owatonna and Wabasha (51 alleged at the latter CBC—again, no details). The Hooded Merganser at Bemidji, the Fox Sparrow at Faribault and the Yellow-headed Blackbird were all probably correct, but the compilers failed to provide the desired details. Less certain was the undocumented White-crowned Sparrow—from the same CBC as the teal. Two Cooper's Hawks were reported with details that left something to be desired: one was convincing in its size description but mentioned a uniform color from cap to nape to back (which usually indicates Sharp-shinned). Unfortunate was the brief and distant view of a possible Gyrfalcon flying into the wind at Baudette—it is a common mistake to confuse goshawks with gyrs, since the goshawk typically has a relatively pointed-winged profile—especially on windy days.

IN SOME RESPECTS, THE WEATHER FOR IOWA'S 23 CBCs WAS JUST as unfavorable, if not more so, than in Minnesota. November had been equally wintery, and most birds with any sense had fled south long before the CBC period. By late December snow cover was widespread and even considerable, as Dubuque reported 24–27" on the ground, while only one CBC (De Soto Nat'l Wildlife Refuge) was free of snow cover. Three CBCs—Clinton, Des Moines and Yellow River Forest—had to endure substantial snowfalls during their count days, and it was somehow even colder in Iowa than farther north. Both Cedar Rapids and Princeton-Camanche experienced lows of -18° , while the low at Waterloo was a frigid -21° , colder than anywhere in Minnesota.

It goes without saying that Davenport easily ran up the highest species total, but their count of 80, their highest tally in ten years, was newsworthy. Second-place Iowa City's 63 species wasn't even close. Davenport also had the two fanciest rarities in the state: a second-winter Iceland Gull and a House Finch! The finch was seen by many as it visited a feeder, while the thoroughly documented Iceland Gull record was satisfactory enough to preclude the more likely possibilities of Thayer's and Glaucous gulls.

Other finds worthy of special note were Cedar Falls' Pine Grosbeak, a logical stray to expect considering the number in southern Minnesota, and their impressive count of 2015

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Snow Buntings. Equally significant was another stray from the North, a Bohemian Waxwing at Iowa City. Three vagrants from the West appeared: a Prairie Falcon at Tristata (now a rare but regular fall/winter stray along the western edge of this three-state region), a Townsend's Solitaire at Decorah, and a Varied Thrush at Des Moines. Clearly, the hardest and most unexpected of the late lingering migrants was that Sora at Muscatine.

As in Minnesota, Northern Shrikes appeared in relative abundance this year—12 CBCs recorded a cumulative total of 30, with five of these counted at Cedar Falls. Similarly, Evening Grosbeaks spilled south into Iowa in impressive numbers: a grand total of 164 was tallied on 14 CBCs—last year not a single grosbeak had been seen. Speaking of winter finches, the three Red Crossbills at Cedar Falls were the only crossbills of either species found, while redpolls fared a bit better with 240 reported from six locales—171 of these were at Spirit Lake and Ames had 57. Only four Iowa counts failed to turn up any siskins (the peaks were 203 at Dubuque and 211 at Burlington), and all but two CBCs had Purple Finch (the new Boone County CBC led the way with 125).

Although there were fewer CBCs from Iowa than in this region's other two states, this state had the dubious distinction of having the most reports of questionable authenticity. Some of these involved problems which recur annually: for example, of the 53 Accipiters reported, all but one were supposedly identifiable (only Iowa City had the presence of mind to list *Accipiter*, sp.), and again this season more Cooper's than Sharp-shinned was the overall illogical tally (23 versus 20—Dubuque classified all five of its Accipiters as Cooper's, while Decorah claimed all three species, including four Cooper's). Brewer's Blackbird, a species not to be expected in winter, also causes problems annually as birders confuse them with Rusties or grackles. This season, eight without details at North Linn were deleted, while the six at Boone County and the nine at Cedar Rapids were only poorly described. Shrikes continue to confound CBCers who insist on identifying every shrike they see (what's wrong with the entry "shrike, sp.?"?). Birders also make the mistake of trying to see the presence or absence of the mask over the bill while there are easier identifying marks; at any rate, the five undocumented Loggerheads at Spirit Lake were changed to Northern, while the Loggerheads farther south at Muscatine and North Linn, also without details, were amended to read shrike, sp.

Also reported without details, but probably valid, were two cormorants at Burlington, Merlin at Dubuque, and Carolina Wren at Iowa City; the Peregrine at Davenport was also probably correct, although the details were quite inadequate. Though not a full species, the "Red-shafted" Flickers at Shenandoah, DeSoto Nat'l Wildlife Refuge and Ames deserved full documentation (especially at Ames). This form may be regular along the Missouri River, but, then again, it may not: a flicker flying by with reddish wing linings is more likely an intermediate than a "pure" Red-shafted. This editor also had trouble with the count of 26 White-crowned Sparrows reported from Iowa City without details and the two Le Conte's at Sioux City; the latter undocumented record was deleted as was the poorly described Osprey at Cedar Rapids.

Finally, two rarities were sufficiently documented to confirm their identifications—although not as the species originally reported. An excellent photo of what was thought to have been an immature Mute Swan at Cedar Rapids showed instead a Tundra Swan, while the details of an alleged Swainson's Thrush at Clinton included a perfect description of the far more likely Hermit Thrush's call note.

MISSOURI'S 28 CBCs—AN INCREASE OF TWO WITH THE OLD KNOWNster count resurrected and a brand-new count from Diamond Grove—did not fare much better meteorologically. As in Minnesota and Iowa, most compilers had little reason for optimism as that bitterly cold November drove many birds farther south. North Center Cass County suffered through a -25° windchill on count day and found many lakes frozen over and much of their wild food crop buried under ice and snow. Kansas City Southeast, normally one of the state's top CBCs, limped in with a species total 20 below normal. Several December ice storms left behind icy roads which discouraged many birders from participating, and a key lake for waterfowl had frozen over. Indeed, almost all Missouri CBCs experienced below freezing lows, and only two had readings in the 50s. The coldest spots were North Center Cass County and Whetstone Creek—both had lows of -2° and highs of only 18°. A majority of the counts also had some snow cover, with Maryville reporting no less than eight inches.

With Kansas City Southeast and other northern CBCs reeling under winter's grip, it was left to southern locales to claim top honors in the species total game. Mingo Nat'l Wildlife Refuge was the clear winner with 82. Although Springfield fell just one species short of this, its effort was tainted by two documentation problems—a Bewick's Wren with no details and a poorly described Le Conte's Sparrow (this CBC also had its undocumented Northern Goshawk deleted). Two goshawks were also reported from Sullivan—also undocumented and therefore deleted—while a report of Bewick's Wrens was sent in without details from Jefferson City and New-Mac. Speaking of wrens, undocumented House Wrens were deleted from Diamond Grove and New-Mac; deleted as well were Sullivan's Prairie Falcon (no details), and Ferruginous Hawks from Hannibal's count week and from Trimble's list—both had details, but Trimble's description clearly indicated Red-tailed to this editor, and Hannibal's details included nothing of substance.

The same old problems cropped up again in Missouri. In addition to the above deletions were the obviously erroneous Swainson's Hawk at Hannibal (this species never has, and probably never will, be reliably documented from a CBC north of extreme southern United States), "only" three Brewer's Blackbird reports without details (usually more CBCs try to claim them), Carolina Chickadee at Hannibal and Black-capped from Diamond Grove and New-Mac (all without details). Another unfortunate tradition is the Montrose Lake CBC. Singlehandedly this locale claimed three Broad-winged Hawks and 30 Chipping Sparrows (all poorly documented and all, of course, deleted), a Merlin and five Le Conte's Sparrows (none with details), and highly dubious counts of 11 "Harlan's" Hawks, 1000 Yellow-rumped Warblers and 767 Field Sparrows. With such a reputation here, is it any wonder that the well-described Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Lark Sparrows also have to be considered dubious?

On a more positive note, there were several legitimate rarities with adequate documentation. Jackass Bend reported six unidentified scoters (they may have been Blacks, the rarest of the three). Two Peregrine Falcons were seen, but even more surprising were the three Prairie Falcons: one at Maryville, another at Squaw Creek Nat'l Wildlife Refuge and one significantly farther east at Orchard Farm. This last CBC also had the state's only Water Pipit, there was a well-described Chipping Sparrow reported from Taney County, and Snow Buntings made it down to Maryville and Jackass Bend (more or less expected this season since there were so many farther north). Certainly unexpected, however, was the Clay-colored Sparrow carefully studied

and documented by many at Squaw Creek—only the second Missouri winter record.

Turning finally to the oft-anticipated winter finches, crossbills were absent entirely, while siskins and Purple Finches rated no comments from compilers. But especially newsworthy were the 20 redpolls which made it as far as Squaw Creek—with decent numbers of this species in Iowa and southern Minnesota, these were logical strays to expect. Also similarly expected with so many to the north was the relative abundance of Evening Grosbeaks. Though last year only two individuals from a single CBC were found, this season no fewer than 165 grosbeaks were counted from nine CBCs; especially surprising were the 70 which turned up in Taney County, way down along the Arkansas frontier.

—Kim R. Eckert

85-23

105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.
Westerville, OH 43081
Aug. 22, 1986

Dear Tom,

Thanks for the letters and photos of the grebes. I wasn't certain if you wanted the photos returned. If you don't mind, I would like to keep them as they are the source of enlightening discussion.

The Storer and Nuechterlein article greatly enhanced our understanding of the identification of Western and Clark's Grebes. This article demonstrated the extent of variability in the intermediate plumages, documenting that a few Clark's can have grayish lores and a small percentage of Westerns can have white extending over the eye ("Grade 4"). Hence, both species can be misidentified based solely on plumage patterns and bill color becomes the primary characteristic in separating these intermediate birds. Unfortunately, I have yet to find a thorough discussion on the variability of bill colors between these species. From my experience, winter Westerns have dark greenish-yellow bills that can appear pale under bright lighting conditions although they will appear to change colors on the same bird. Winter Clark's have bright yellow or orange-yellow bills (no greenish whatsoever) that never appear dark. During the breeding season, Westerns can have fairly bright yellow bills while Clark's become an intense orange-yellow that is visible at considerable distances. In any event, bill color becomes the most important characteristic in separating these intermediate plumages and it is not possible to positively identify Clark's Grebes without it (Westerns can retain their "intermediate" head patterns into May so that even spring migrants can't be identified solely on the basis of head patterns although these characteristics are certainly suggestive).

By the way, I have observed fall grebes with a head pattern similar to the Clark's Grebe in your photo but with a dark bill. I now know they were Westerns (based on the Storer and Nuechterlein article) but they had me perplexed for a while.

In addition, the information in Ratti's article is not necessarily valid, based on the findings of Storer and Nuechterlein. Ratti based his identifications on head patterns, which would lead him to misidentify some Westerns as Clark's and vice versa. Hence, his statement on bill color is not completely valid as he was misidentifying a small proportion of his specimens.

From my perspective as Regional Editor, I am troubled by the fact that most grebe documentations emphasize the head pattern and virtually ignore the bill color. I hope the identification article in IOWA BIRD LIFE emphasized the need to critically examine both characteristics, especially during fall and especially for intermediate plumages. Since our understanding of the identification of these species is still evolving, it would be preferable to have descriptions of the entire bird so that these records can be fully re-evaluated in the light of future identification information. By the way, I agree with your assessment of last fall's Clark's sighting although its positive identification is based solely on Moore's complete description. This spring's Clark's sighting was inadequately documented; the birds were only observed asleep and the important face and bill characteristics could not be viewed.

As a footnote, the proportion of Clark's Grebes in the plains states is exceedingly small, less than 2 percent of the

total population. I did not observe any among the hundreds of Westerns in the Dakotas and Montana during July even though I was carefully looking for the. Hence, I would expect them to be only very rare migrants in Iowa and not observed annually.

On to other matters. I will make the necessary corrections on the Black-backed Woodpecker date. Ross' report indicated the bird was seen on "several days" (unspecified) but much of the information he provided was rather vague and difficult to utilize. Let me know if you noticed any other errors.

With regards to the Iceland Gull record, I have attached a copy of detailed comments concerning my analysis of this sighting. After reading and re-reading the documentation, I can find no fault with them and all important field marks were properly described. In fact, none of your criticisms are justified:

1. bill color: the bill color of all second winter gulls is variable. However, second-winter Iceland Gulls frequently have flesh-colored bases and dark tips. This description is certainly adequate for an Iceland Gull.

As a footnote, I am very reluctant to use bill color as a definitive field mark for immature gulls. They are just too variable. At best, it may serve as an aid in identification but absolutely not as the definitive factor separating these two species.

2. "subjective features": the bird was observed in direct comparison with two similar species. Hence, these "subjective features" could be accurately described. While the potential for misjudging these features is always present, they were studied under the best possible circumstance for this sighting. al-

3. iris color: certainly not diagnostic in second winter gulls, just too much variability. It would be nice to have it included in the description but its absence doesn't affect the bird's identification.

4. mantle color: see my attached comments for a discussion on the appearance of gray in the mantle of second winter Iceland Gulls. At that time of the year, it is quite possible that gray was not visible (or present) in the mantle. pos-

5. description: admittedly, the documentations are not painstakingly detailed. However, all important field marks were properly described and there were no discrepancies with the expected field marks of a second winter Iceland Gull.

Given your past problems with sight records of difficult to identify gulls, I can understand your reluctance to accept any sight record of these species. However, I can find no basis to reject it, especially since it was observed by multiple observers at a likely date and location. Hence, I don't feel comfortable publishing a retraction of what appears to be a satisfactory sight record. I can understand why the observers would "feel strongly" about this sighting; I would be very upset under similar circumstances.

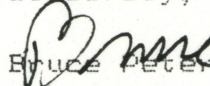
At this time, it appears to me that the situation concerning the status of Iceland Gulls in Iowa needs to be clarified in AMERICAN BIRDS. If your record committee is not going to re-evaluate this record, I would appreciate receiving more detailed information on the reasons for its rejection. I will then prepare a Corrigendum for a future issue (which I will let you read

My apologies
for the
screamed up
format here.
It sure
didn't look
like this on
the computer.

before it is published). By the way my offer to show you winter gulls along Lake Erie still stands. It sounds like the active birders in Iowa could use the experience with these species. Let me know if you are ever interested.

Sounds like there have been some exceptional birds in Iowa this summer. The best that has turned up in Ohio is a Least Tern and nesting Bewick's Wren although I just received a second-hand report of a Wood Ibis that warrants looking into. Hope the good birds continue to turn up in Iowa, at least I'll have something to write about.

Sincerely,


Bruce Peter John

EVALUATION OF THE ICELAND GULL SIGHTING OF 27-28 DEC. 1985 IN SCOTT COUNTY, IOWA

The first step in gull identification is to correctly age the bird. All observers provided similar descriptions. The absence of gray in the mantle eliminates adult and third winter gulls while the absence of obviously barred, tan coloration and a definite tail band eliminates first-winter. Hence, the bird is in its second winter plumage.

FIELD MARKS

SIZE; Although notoriously difficult to properly judge, the bird was observed in direct juxtaposition with Glaucous and Herring Gulls. In flight and at rest, the bird was described as noticeably smaller than the Glaucous Gulls and slight smaller or the same size as a Herring Gull. This description matches an Iceland Gull. In the eastern US, a small female Glaucous Gull can be fairly close to the largest male Herring Gull in size; I have never seen a Glaucous that was smaller than a Herring.

SHAPE CHARACTERISTICS; All observers agreed the bird was slimmer and more delicate than the Glaucous Gulls while Martsching also noted the head and bill were slightly smaller in proportion to its body than the Herring Gull. Since direct comparisons were possible, these differences should be relatively distinctive. The relatively long wings were also noted by Barker, another characteristic of Iceland Gulls although I have seen a few Glaucous Gulls that had wings extending slightly beyond the tail. Hence, this characteristic is not completely diagnostic. The relatively slimmer wings in flight and flight characteristics were also properly described for an Iceland Gull.

PLUMAGE; The uniform very pale tan coloration is consistent with all second winter white-winged gulls. The absence of visible gray in the mantle is not surprising, especially during early winter. Presence of gray in the mantle is variable; it is generally most noticeable by late January/early February although some second winter birds seemingly do not attain any visible gray mantle feathers. The white primaries are also consistent for this species and positively eliminated Thayer's Gull at this age. Since there are no plumage differences between second winter Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, these characteristics do not aid in separating these species.

SOFT PARTS; Iris color was not described but is too variable in immature gulls to be of use in identification. The legs were "fleshy pink" which would be expected on both species. Bill color is also quite variable on second winter Iceland Gulls, from mostly black with a faint pinkish base to pinkish with a well defined narrow black tip. Glaucous Gulls do not exhibit this variability and only have pink bills with black tips. Hence, the observed bill color is of no use in distinguishing these species and is consistent with both.

COMMENTS;

In second winter plumage, separating Iceland and Thayer's Gulls is not difficult and the uniform tan upperparts with white upper primaries positively eliminates the latter species. Separating Iceland and Glaucous Gulls is more difficult as there are no definitive plumage characteristics separating these species. One is forced to use subjective differences in size, shape and bill features to identify these species. When the two are together, as occurred in this sighting, these differences are fairly obvious to observers who have some experience with gulls. Their description of overall size (slightly smaller than a

Herring), head shape (more rounded), bill shape (shorter and slimmer than the Glaucous) and flight characteristics (narrower wings, more rapid wingbeats) are all consistent with an Iceland Gull and taken together, eliminate Glaucous Gull. In addition, the bird was observed at a likely location and time and I have no reason to question the reliability of the multiple observers. Given all of these facts, I have no basis to reject this sight record which correctly describes a second winter Iceland Gull.

Peter
com

12 June 1986

Dear Pete.

I received your documentation on Iceland Gull, but have not received anything from the others you mentioned.

I agree that it is "too bad this was originally circulated prior to submission of all documentations." I think the reevaluation would be strengthened by an explanation of why the four individuals involved did not submit documentations with the LBL report or their winter season field report. Did you expect the secretary to contact people to see if there were more documentations? Or did some of the documentations get lost? Also, with such delayed reports we have asked for the original field notes in addition to the documentation form (e.g., We did not review Francis Moore's documentation of the Mississippi Kite until he found his original notes).

In your comments on the rereview of this record you say that "Bill Barker saw 3 or 4 Glaucous + Iceland later in the same day." Is there anything to really suggest there were four. The first time I heard of the possibility of 4 was in your comment, as I am sure I would have looked harder if I had comprehended that there might have been 4 birds.

In your comment on rereview you also accused me of lying. The statement preceeding this is the one quoted above. If you told me that Bill had seen four birds, I didn't catch it. Perhaps, you were referring to the previous statement "I did not id the bird JHK saw on Mon. as an Iceland." If so, I had a misimpression of what you were saying and I apologize--I thought you were arguing that the smaller bird was probably the Iceland. If I made such an error, I can assure you that it was one of comprehension, not intent.

I also think it would be helpful if each of the observers could draw a picture of the extent of dark on the bill, since to me this is the field mark that carries the most weight.

While on Attu, Carl and I talked to several expert birders about identification of immature Iceland Gulls. Guy McCaskie and Fritz Scheider said they would not even consider a bird with a dark bill tip as being an Iceland unless the iris color were seen (iris color attains that of an adult in the second year for all gulls). They noted that small forms of Glaucous Gulls are seen and that wing projection is not a useful field mark for immature birds.

B. J. Rose showed his Lake Manawa "Thayer's Gull" during his slide show on a rainy day at Attu and none of the experts there thought the bird was a Thayer's, in fact, definitely not Thayer's. Several thought the pattern on the flying bird matched first year Mew Gull.

85-23

4 Aug 1986

Bruce Peterjohn
105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.
Westerville, OH 43081

Dear Bruce,

I was surprised to see in your report of the winter season that you did not question the report of Iceland Gull from Scott Co. Neither did you boldface it. We have no records of Iceland Gull in Iowa--both this one and the previous one were rejected by the Records Committee. This is a particularly sensitive issue since one of the members of the committee saw both birds and feels quite strongly about the identification.

I was most influenced by the distinct dark tip to the bill, which suggests to me that it was a Glaucous Gull until proven otherwise. The features suggesting Iceland are quite subjective and much more likely to be misjudged than the bill color. I was quite disappointed by the quality of the documentations and failure to photograph the bird or look for other features such as eye color and gray in the mantle.

Since this record is bound to surface again, I would greatly appreciate your comments and reasons for accepting the record.

Also, the Black-backed Woodpecker was only seen on only one day; we couldn't find it the next day in spite of an extensive search.

Hope your trip was a good one.

Best regards,

cm

105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.
Westerville, OH 43081
6 Oct. 1986

Tom Kent
211 Richards St.
Iowa City, IA 52240

Dear Tom,

Many apologies for not responding sooner. My last letter to you was written at 3 AM on the morning I was leaving for several weeks in England and I have been tremendously overburdened upon my return. I hope my tardiness did not cause you too many problems. I will be more prompt in the future.

I am unaware of any reference describing the tail patterns of adult male Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds. From the information I received on the Iowa bird, the combination of the photograph which clearly establishes the bird's sex and age and Larry Stone's description of the back color positively identifies the bird.

As requested, I have enclosed a copy of Martsching's documentation of the Iowa Iceland Gull from last winter. With regards to the bill color of second-winter Iceland Gulls, Grant's description is the best available. As stated in Grant (1st ed., p. 140), their bills vary from entirely dark to mostly pink with a distinct black tip. While they may have a tendency to have a less well defined black tip than a Thayer's or Glaucous Gull, the bill colors of all second-winter gulls are just too variable to be definitive field marks.

With regards to the eye color of second-winter Iceland Gulls, I strongly disagree with McCaskie's and Scheider's assertions on the iris color of these birds for two reasons:

1. In adult kumlieni gulls, iris color varies from yellow to yellow strongly flecked with brown (see Frontispiece, Smith, 1966, Ornithological Monographs No. 4). The birds with flecked irises appear dark eyed except at very close range under optimal circumstances and even then their irises are not pure yellow. These birds would also appear dark eyed during their second winter as well. These dark-eyed individuals comprise approximately 10-15 percent of the birds I've seen on Lake Erie and can be very difficult to separate from a Thayer's Gull.
2. Iris color of all large gulls is most variable during their second winter. For example, look at Grant's descriptions of second-winter Herring and Glaucous Gulls where iris color is modified by the adjectives "occasionally" and "often". While these birds should be attaining their adult iris color at this age, many individuals do not. It is not at all unusual to observe second-winter gulls that have retained their first-winter iris color. As a result of this variability, I am unaware of any useful reference that uses iris color of second-winter gulls as a definitive field mark.

With regards to boldfacing the Iceland Gull sighting, I will if there is universal agreement that it constitutes the first acceptable record for Iowa. I always boldface first state records. Whether or not subsequent records are boldfaced depends

upon several factors. For species that are relatively regular in other portions of the Region, I may not boldface a second state record. For example, I probably won't boldface the next record of Thayer's Gull from Iowa or Pacific Loon from Ohio simply because these sightings are not that unusual from a regional context. However, I will boldface fourth or fifth state records if they are unusual from a regional perspective. For example, I will boldface the next Magnificent Frigatebird from Ohio even though there are three extant specimens from the state. I recognize that I am conservative in what I boldface but with six states in the Region, I have to be or I would have 20-30 boldface species per report.

So much for the Iceland Gull record. Let me know of your record committee's decision when it reconsiders this sighting and I will prepare an appropriate Corrigenda.

From the information in the literature and discussions with knowledgeable birders (Jon Dunn, Paul Lehman and others), my understanding of the head patterns of Western and Clark's Grebes is as follows:

1. Western Grebes can definitely have white extending above the eye, especially during fall and winter but it can also be retained into the spring. I have seen living birds and photographs of Westerns in this plumage.
2. Several people have claimed to have observed Westerns with white surrounding the eye. I have never seen such a bird nor a photograph of one so I am still somewhat skeptical of this claim. In any event, until this claim can be proven or disproven, I do not feel comfortable accepting Clark's Grebe identifications based solely on this characteristic. Hence, a careful description of the head pattern and bill color are necessary before I will accept Clark's Grebes sightings at this time.

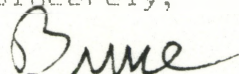
With regards to Dinsmore's and Martsching's Clark's Grebe sighting this spring, I was mistaken about the circumstances of the sighting (and should have looked it up before I wrote the last letter). However, I still feel that record was not adequately substantiated. In the descriptions I received, neither one described the bill color! This is especially disturbing since they supposedly were close enough to have described the face pattern. From my experience, the bill color of spring Clark's Grebes is a brilliant orange-yellow that is visible as far as you can see the bird. I have photos where a grebe is too distant to determine its face pattern but the bill color is very apparent. Hence, their sighting is very troublesome to me since the absence of bill color descriptions really makes me wonder how well they saw the head pattern.

As a footnote, the Clark's Grebes I have observed through mid-October all retained this brilliant bill color. Even begging juveniles I observed in early fall had a fairly similarly colored bill which was much brighter than juvenile Westerns. While the Clark's bill color fades somewhat during winter, it is still the definitive field mark when head patterns are inconclusive or can not be accurately determined.

Hope the birding has been good in Iowa this fall. There has been uncooperative Roseate Spoonbill (good details) and Wood Stork (haven't seen the details yet) in Ohio but both disappeared before they could be chased. Otherwise, we've been content with

White Pelican, Western Kingbirds, Clay-colored Sparrow and a good shorebird flight. Again, I apologize for the lengthy delay in my response. Keep in touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bruce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bruce Peterjohn

9 October 1986

85-23

F. G. Scheider
4304 Belmont Drive
Liverpool, N.Y. 13088

Dear Fritz,

Thanks for your willingness to look at our Iceland Gull record(s). The documentations are from two locations about 15 miles apart on the Mississippi River. There are no accepted records for Iowa, although one previous record was considered probable. The documentations are as follows:

Above Lock and Dam 15

22 Dec -- Mary Lou Petersen
22 Dec -- Peter C. Petersen
22 Dec -- Ann Barker
23 Dec -- Bill Barker

Above Lock and Dam 14

27 Dec -- Mark A. Brogie (I assume he wrote it)
28 Dec -- Paul Martsching

We are interested in your response to the following questions, as well as any response as you would give it as a member of the New York Records Committee.

1. Do the descriptions fit Iceland Gull? Is there anything that doesn't fit?
2. If the descriptions are consistent with Iceland Gull, are they specific beyond reasonable doubt?
3. Can Glaucous Gull be excluded? Based on your experience with white-winged gulls, could the observers have misjudged the size and head shape?

Obviously, you don't know the ability and experience of the observers, but we would like your opinion based on the facts presented and your experience with problems in perception for observers in general.

I hope your fall birding has improved. We have had nothing exciting and I haven't been out much.

Thanks for your help.

Wm

85-23

F. G. SCHEIDER
4304 BELMONT DRIVE
LIVERPOOL, NY 13090

October 26, 1986

Dear Tom,

Have read all the accounts (85-23 & 85-24) quite carefully and also had Paul DeBenedictis, an avid laridophile, go over them. We both agree that the reports are plausible but not conclusive for Iceland Gull but the descriptions do not eliminate 1) a small, particularly a female, Glaucous Gull, 2) a leucistic Herring Gull, or 3) a hybrid, perhaps Glaucous x Thayer's or Herring x Iceland. The most disturbing thing throughout the descriptions is the strongly bicolored bill (black tip, pinkish base) which does occur in Iceland Gull but usually late enough in the cycle to maturity to have distinctive pale gray feathers, even patches of same in the mantle, at the same time. The other possibility is that you have a very pale Thayer's Gull and I do not know how to distinguish such from an Iceland except by measurements in hand. Also the eastern Canada Arctic Glaucous Gulls are large (the typical eastern bird guide Glaucous) but the species has a cline in size to the smaller barrovianus subspecies in Alaska. The intermediate size birds in the central Canadian Arctic, especially females, can approximate Iceland Gulls in size.

Further, I am convinced that there is such gradation in Thayer's Gull - if it is a species at all - that one end of it will be identified as Iceland, the other dismissed as Herring Gull and some in the middle have enough characters that people will call them Thayer's. Actually the whole Thayer's - Iceland Gull problem may dissolve soon. Paul says the Canadian biologists have found intergrades and interbreeding in the contact colonies in the eastern Canadian Arctic. So it looks like Thayer's Gull could go the way of Audubon's Warbler and Black Rosy Finch. Sic transit gloria mundi. And maybe the endless arguments regarding "Is it or isn't it a Thayer's?" will disappear too.

Realizing that you want a definite answer, I'm sorry I can't be more definite. But don't feel too bad. About 5% of our white-winged gulls are alternately identified by good birders - one bird, two observers - one says Glaucous, one says Iceland, occasionally someone says Thayer's, and confusion reigns.

8523

10/26/86
page 2

For a neat discussion of the hazards of Glaucous~~us~~ vs Iceland and other pitfalls, read thru P.T. Grant's "Gulls: A Guide to Identification" pages 128-133, also see page 271, #349 - which could well be a leucistic Herring Gull or even a hybrid. Unfortunately a definite record that far away from the normal winter range will probably require a specimen. Next time, a shotgun and a retriever.

A Black-legged Kittiwake at Sandy Pond Inlet in Oswego County on 10/19 and a beautiful Say's Phoebe there on 10/23 - life is getting better.

Sincerely yours,

Fritz Scheider
Fritz Scheider

F. G. SCHEIDER
4304 BELMONT DRIVE
LIVERPOOL, NY 13090

REPORTING DETAILS: UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES AND/OR SPECIES IN HIGH NUMBERS

CBC name Davenport CBC date 12-22-85 Compiler P.C. Peterson
 Observer writing this account and date Mary Lou Peterson, Dec. 22, 1985
 SPECIES Iceland Gull NUMBER, AGE, SEX 1, 2nd winter
 Distance from bird(s) 300 yards Relative size of bird near Herring Skuas
 HEAD & NECK (Describe forehead, crown, auricular, malar region, median line, etc.) Creamy white on whole head, some mottling, head rounded

EYE & LORES (Describe supercilium, ring, stripe, color, etc.)

darkish eye

UPPER & LOWER MANDIBLES Slight, fleshy-horn color, dark tip

LEGS & FEET pinkish

UPPERPARTS (Describe nape, back, rump, upper tail coverts, etc.)

Creamy white, back pale tan

UNDERPARTS (Describe throat, belly, side, flanks, crissum, etc.)

White with very pale tan mottling

RECTRICES (Describe inner, middle, outer tail feathers, color pattern, shape, etc.) White with very light tanish bars.

WING (Describe color, length, shape, linings, bars, coverts, leading and trailing edges, etc.) Creamy white with tan mottling, extending along tail twice as far past tip as Glaucous.

VOCALIZATION none

BEHAVIOR Buoyant flight. Seen with two Glaucous, First winter, and various aged Herring Gulls.

Date of observation 22 Dec. Time 11:45-12:10 Weather 35°F Sky cover mostly clear

Duration of observation 30 min. Bird - Sun orientation right angle

Exact location 3/4 mi. E. of Locks Dam 15 on Miss River, 200 yds. off channel

Habitat river ice Other observers P.C. Peterson, Corey & Lewis, B. Elias
Brett Ashford, Dale Dickinson Optical equipment 30-60x scopes

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS seen later in day by Ann & Bill Barker, later in week by Pete Wickham, Paul Martching, Steve Dinsmore & Bill Barker again

AN ACCOMPANYING SKETCH OR PHOTOGRAPH CAN BE AN EXCELLENT FURTHER DOCUMENTATION

three species.

General appearance: An ill white or buffy-white Gull, slightly smaller than adjacent Herring Gulls. Overall impression was of a slimmer, more delicate looking bird than the Glaucous. Legs and feet were fleshy pink. Bill had a fleshy base with black tip and was thinner than that of the Glaucous. Head shape was taller and smaller than the Glaucous. In comparison, the Glaucous had a much stockier, heavier body, slightly larger than adjacent Herring Gulls, with a noticeably flatter head than the Iceland. Wings of the Iceland, observed rest when preening, were all white (primaries + secondaries) and when folded at rest, extended well beyond the tail feathers. In comparison, the wings of the Glaucous extended just to the tail tip. Both birds were observed walking and moving about slowly, and the aforementioned size and general shape differences held evident throughout the entire observation.

- Ann Barker

A bird reported to be an Iceland Gull was observed on Sun. Dec 22, 1985 at 2:00 - 2:30 PM above Dam #15 ^{from} the Saurin shore of the Mississippi River, by Bill & Ann Barker. The weather at the time of observation was mostly clear. Equipment used: Leitz Trinovud 10x40 binoculars, and a Swift Lynx Zoom spotting scope set at 35-40x. We were situated approximately 50 yards from a flock of Gulls resting on the ice.

Composition of the flock was mostly Herring Gulls with initially two, then later only one larger white Gull identified as a Glaucous, and one smaller white Gull tentatively identified as the Iceland. The bird was not observed in flight except for a short distance, & without binoculars. During our 20 min observation, behavior consisted of resting, preening, and walking among the flock. Its wings were seen nearly fully extended and then re-folded during preening. At one point, for about 2-3 minutes, it was observed in the same scope field as the Glaucous and Herring Gulls, affording the opportunity for comparison of the

6/5

Tom:

You should receive docs. from
Paul + Steve re. this bird + a note
from Bill Barker re. his 2nd obs on
12/23. Too bad this was originally
circulated prior to submission of
all documentation. PCP

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Iceland Gull 2. Number of birds: 1
3. Location Davenport, County: Scott
4. Date: 22 Dec. 1985 5. Time bird seen: 11:40 AM to 12:10 P.M.
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): White-winged Gull slightly smaller than Herring Gulls & noticeably smaller than the two Glaucous Gulls with it. Head very round, especially forehead. Body, head, wing white with some pale buff on flank. Bill dark at tip, pale at base making bird in 2nd winter plumage. Legs & feet pinkish, wings extended 2-3" beyond tail while bird was standing. Eye appeared dark, but range was a bit long to be sure. Bill slightly smaller than that of nearby Herring Gulls and much smaller than the two Glaucous nearby. Bill was very thin in comparison to Herring Gulls also.
7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
8. Description of behavior: Standing on ice with Herring Gulls of various ages & 2 Glaucous Gulls. When flying, buoyant flight like a Ring-bill and quite unlike any Glaucous was noted by all.
9. Habitat - general: Channel of Miss. R., near middle of river when standing.
specific 1/2-3/4 mi. above Lock 15.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Glaucous Gull eliminated by size, wing extension well beyond tail, flight, head shape, all emphasized by direct comparison with Glaucous Gulls. The next afternoon Bill Barker compared this bird to two different sized Glaucous Gulls and it was smaller than the smaller Glaucous Gull. Plumage lighter than Glaucous also.
11. Distance (how measured)? 300 yards, est. 12. Optical equipment: 30-80x scopes
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): sun at right angle from left.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have seen at Lock 14 at Churchill, MLP saw at Churchill - 1984 (June).
15. Other observers: Mary Lou Petersen, Corey & Lewis Blevins, Dale Dickinson, Brett Ashford.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes, Blevins & Dickinson had reached their id. choice before we arrived but waited for our ID before commenting
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Pete Wickham, Mark Bragie, Steve Dinsmore, Paul Mertsching, Bill & Ann Barker
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Nat. Geographic, Robbins & Peterson guides consulted during observations to check for other id. points but basic id. made prior to consultation. The guides reinforced the id. Cramp checked later for size information re. Glaucous.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 10 minutes

Peter C. Petersen

Address: 235 McClellan Blvd.

Signature

Date: June 6, 1986

City, State: Davenport, Iowa 52803

(over)

QC C.B.C- 12/22

Iceland Gull - above 15 from
Jack C. parking lot, slightly
downstream. Loc. + Id. by C.B.C.

Blevins

ID points —

Wh. winged, smaller than H. &
much smaller than 2 Gl. G., standing
right with it. Flight very Rg-b-
like. much different than G.
Head very round, espec above bill -
All white with pale edging to
feathers thru scope Bill, pale
except tip dark (2nd winter)

Legs - pinkish.

Wing noticeably longer than tail,
maybe 3"

Eye - dark?

Bill sm. - smaller than H. & G., thin,
used N.G., Robbins + RTP-E.

See Cramp + Harrison later

On Mon Dec 23, 1985, about 3 PM. I went just below roller dam (15) + saw a white-winged Gull flying in a southerly direction (Circular.) Within 5 min, I went immediately above the roller dam + saw another white winged gull on the ice. I then went 200 yds upstream and saw 2 white-winged gulls on the ice. I presumed I could have seen a total of 4 white winged gulls or theoretically as few as 2. At least 3 is the most likely, based on distance and time involved. One of the 2 white winged gulls appeared similar to that described in the attached notes.

Eric Barker