

Iceland Gull
13 Mar 1991
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co., IA
*Schantz, *Fuller, *Kent,*****
IBL 62:70-71, Kent 1992

Record Number: 91-20
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Tim Schantz, 13 Mar
Jim Fuller, 14 Mar
Thomas H. Kent, 14 Mar
Ann Johnson, 14, 15, 16 Mar
Stephen J. Dinsmore, 14 Mar
Jim Dinsmore, 14 Mar
Diane C. Porter, 15 Mar
Jim Sinclair, 16 Mar
Mark Preschooldt, 16 Mar
Beth Proescholdt, 16 Mar

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent, 14 Mar, 7 prints, P-0320 (IBL 62:95)
Tim Schantz, 2 slides, P-0302 [not reviewed]

LETTERS

Bruce Peterjohn, 22 May 1991 (solicited and submitted by Kent)
Kevin J. Zimmer, 16 Dec 1991 (solicited by committee)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: none
Records Committee: IBL 62:70-71
Photographs: IBL 62:95 (P-0302)
Kent, T. H. Iceland Gulls in Iowa. IBL 62:95-98.

VOTE: 1-A-P, 1-A-D, 5-NA

A-P, What an excellent set of documents. This bird was a hard one to accept at first, but after restudying Kevin Zimmer article and Iceland gulls it was easily acceptable. Even the photo of the gull with the tail band fell into place. Good bird.

NA, When I first glanced at the photographs of Iceland Gull, I was rather doubtful of the identification. Compared to my one and only personal experience with this species, the Red Rock bird appeared too dark and "contrasty" in the flight photos, too flat-headed, and with way too much tail band. However, after reading Zimmer's article ("Plumage Variation in "Kumlien's Iceland Gull" Birding, October 1991), I am ready to admit that almost any gull could be an Iceland!! First of all, Glaucous Gull is clearly eliminated by size, bill coloration, and primary extension beyond the tail. Next I agree with Peterjohn that in the photos the sitting bird looks very different from the bird in flight. However, I doubt that two or more strangely colored birds would appear at the same time and place. In flight, this bird looks much darker -- even the primaries and wing tips do not especially look white or even very light -- certainly not translucent as described in most of the documentations. One picture appears to show dark shafts on the primaries -- the typical Thayer's pattern. In another where the flighted bird faces directly away from the camera, I think I can see a hint of a dark trailing edge to the primaries -- another Thayer's

characteristic (but in the picture with the bird facing the camera this is not apparent). The tail band shown in these photos is much darker and more defined than the example of Iceland with a tail band in Zimmer's article, and very different from any illustration in Grant (even though these birds are all *L. glaucoides* rather than *L. g. kumlieni*). In the two photos of the bird in true profile, the head is flat-crowned and sloping. Only in what I believe to be a 3/4 view does the head look round or "pigeon-headed." This is another instance when most documentations are at odds with the photographs. I am also somewhat concerned about the fact (as Peterjohn mentions) that the head and neck look very light and different somehow from the mantle and wings. And as both Dinsmores mention in their documentations, the bill seems to be rather large and heavy for a "typical" Iceland. The above characteristics, however, are probably within the range of variability as illustrated in Zimmer's article. Concentrating on the documentations, the majority described a pale gull between Herring and Ring-bill in size with pure or almost pure white primaries, wings that extended considerably beyond the tail, a bicolored bill, and a tail with a band (variably described), dark eye and bright pink legs. I am unfamiliar with leucistic Herring Gulls so cannot comment too much on Peterjohn's opinion but believe primary extension as shown in sitting bird is too long for Herring. Would it be cowardly to conclude that this may be a Iceland/Thayer's intergrade?! Or possibly a Herring x Glaucous hybrid as shown in Harrison's Seabirds (plate 62)? There were many excellent documentations but my vote reflects my doubt that this bird exhibits all the characteristics of a pure Iceland Gull.

NA, I have some sympathy for Peterjohn's speculation that two birds may have been seen. From the photos, it appears that this bird is whitish at rest but turns brown in flight. I assume, though, that Kent was photographing the same bird. I feel I could write a lot on this record and not really go anywhere. We have a number of observers with little relevant experience who content it was an Iceland. We have an outside opinion who feels it was not even in the Thayer's/Iceland complex, and an observer experienced with the species who is evidently unsure. By and large, the descriptions fit Iceland, and, for the most part, the photographs support the identification. There is evidently precedent for Iceland in the upper Midwest if we assume the folks in Illinois know what they are doing. In some years, Icebergs are as frequently reported, and presumably accepted, as Thayer's. Most of the "hard" field marks support Iceland, such as evident lightening of the primaries, size, bill color, and general plumage color. Some of the arguments against Iceland are more subjective, such as head shape and bill structure. The latter factors, however, are valuable when considered by an experienced observer. I think the tail band question is, if not moot, at least not decisive. Zimmer (Birding, XXIII, 5) puts this in the proper perspective. I think there is some chance that we have a Thayer's/Iceland intergrade, the idea advanced by Dinsmore. Zimmer's caveat deals with the prospects of intergrades, the

pitfalls therein, and suggests extreme caution in accepting extralimital Iceland Gull records. Acknowledging the fact that I would have felt as comfortable flipping a coin with this record as attempting to analyze it, and anticipating further outside review which I understand is coming, I am going to take a conservative NA for now.

NA, I think the darkish tail band eliminates a pure Iceland Gull. The photo of the dorsal view appears to be identical to a Herring x Glaucous Hybrid pictured on page 147 plate 214x of Harrison Seabird Guide. The picture also shows the same bill pattern as seen in several of the photos.

NA, I cannot identify the bird and would like to see comments of several experts before making a final decision. The plumage is first basic. Based on Kevin Zimmer's article (Birding 23:254-269) and photos, I make the following observations: Iceland Gulls in Zimmer's photos appear smaller headed, longer-thinner necked, and smaller bodied. The bill size seems smaller and primaries seem to extend further beyond the tertials in Iceland Gulls as compared to our bird. The tertials in our bird appear brown -- a feature strongly favoring Thayer's over Iceland according to Zimmer. Although Iceland Gulls seem to have a tail band, I think the tail band on our bird was too dark, especially considering that overall the bird was very light even for an Iceland Gull. The possibilities of our bird include Glaucous, Thayer's, Iceland, Herring, and hybrid. Although Glaucous Gulls can be small (especially Pacific birds), the bill pattern (should be flesh with sharp black tip) and tail band exclude this species. A pale Thayer's lacking pigment in the primaries or hybrid with the same features seems possible. I can't get a good idea of leucistic Herring Gull appearance. Need to search literature. Although size was smaller than Herring Gulls, I don't think this feature weights very strongly due to great variation in males and females.

NA, I know light can do funny things when it strikes a bird from different angles. The photo with these documentations show this. The photos of the bird sitting on (standing in) the water appears to have strong sunlight directly on it and the Ring-billed Gulls nearby look washed out and lighter than they should. The other photos of the bird in flight appear to have more natural color to them. Two of them show a good look at upper surface of the wings and tail. The primaries, secondaries and tail look fairly dark for an Iceland. Most documentations describe a darker subterminal tail band and this is seen clearly in the photo. The photo also shows darker primaries and secondaries than I would have expected. All the documentations are well done and as expected describe (for the most part) a first year Iceland Gull. The information from Peterjohn is interesting. No one, nor any of the literature I have read and studied, mentioned a leucistic Herring Gull. This is an interesting theory. Some documentors mention a flat, low head shape. If you put all these doubts together I do not believe that this record is beyond reasonable doubt. Two documentors went so far as to call this bird a Thayer's Gull. A leucistic Herring

Gull is a possibility, however remote or rare, given the information we have. I do not think Thayer's Gull is completely ruled out either. I hope all this makes sense.

A-D, The many good documentations provide lots of good details. Kevin Zimmer's long article on Iceland Gulls in Birding (Oct. 1991) provided lots of good information on Iceland Gulls also. Zimmer's statements that most first winter Iceland Gulls have a true tail band eliminate a major question of this bird being a Iceland Gull. Zimmer also states the "leg and foot color is pinkish or reddish-pink, sometimes becoming quite bright, and is indistinguishable from that of Thayer's and Glaucous gulls." I feel all the information presented eliminate a Thayer's Gull from consideration and show this to be a first winter Iceland Gull.

REVOTE: 5 A-P, 2 A-D

A-D, Comments from K. Zimmer are sufficient for me.

A-P, I found Kevin Zimmer's letter to be most interesting and helpful. He cleared up doubts I had about the tail band and primaries. I am still uncomfortable about the flat-crowned head shape of this bird but if Zimmer feels it is within the limits of Iceland Gull, I will go with the expert on this one.

A-P, In light of the outside review of this record, I am changing my vote to A-P.

A-P, Sighting 91-20 is supported by a multitude of good detailed information and photos. The information in my view supports a late first/winter Iceland Gull. 1) Size 10% smaller than the average Herring Gull. 2) Harrison's says that first/winter Iceland Gulls have a white chin, throat, and breast which is supported by the photos. 3) Harrison's, NG, and Kaufman's indicate Thayer's Gull has slightly darker primaries, this gull has slightly lighter primaries as pointed out by the documentors and verified by the photos. 5) The bill seems large in comparison to the small bills of the Ring-billed Gulls present. The bill is shorter than the head whereas the Herring Gull bill would be as long as the head and appear thicker. The bill which is apparently never all black as Thayer's begins change over to the second/winter bicolor pattern in late winter. I think the bicolored bill is slightly overexposed in the pictures making the demarcation appear more pronounced than it really was. 6) The problematic tail is colored with the mantle and matches Kaufman's description of Iceland gull which show this feature. I agree with the expert opinion of Kevin J. Zimmer. I think the evidence supports a first/winter Iceland Gull.

A-P, Zimmer answered all the doubts that I had. I agree with his comments on probability.

A-P, Based on the information contained in the 12/16/91 letter from Kevin Zimmer to Tom Kent I change my vote to A-P.

A-D, Bruce Peterjohn's comments were helpful, but he did not have any of the documentations submitted to review at that time other than possibly Tom Kent's along with Tom's photos. I feel Kevin Zimmer's letter after reviewing the photos and all the documentations on the Iceland Gull report answer many questions and concerns posed by the reviewers in the first round. I feel this is a good Iceland Gull record.

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union
Iceland Gull

Printed: 07/17/93
13 Mar 1991 RC No. 91-20 (cont)

REVOTE at meeting of 11 Apr 1992 after discussing photos: 6 A-P,
1 A-D.

During the identification process, other small doves of comparable size were ruled out. The Ruddy Ground-Dove does not have scaling anywhere on its body. The Inca Dove is scaled, but has a longer tail, an entirely black bill, a light belly with black stripes, and lacks the black areas on the wing.

Although not always easy to find, the dove did remain in the same area for about two weeks, allowing a large number of birders to view this first state record. The last sighting was on 2 November during an early season blizzard.

A Common Ground-Dove was recorded at Waconda Country Club in Des Moines on 10 June 1922 (C. H. Pangburn, *The Ground Dove in central Iowa*, *Auk* 39:566, 1922). The author, who claimed to be familiar with this species, speculated that it might be an escaped cage bird. Because of this and lack of description, the bird was not accepted to the state list.

In recent years, a pattern of vagrancy for this species has become apparent (Figure 2). The monthly distribution of sightings is as follows: March (1), May (2), June (1), July (1), August (3), September (4), October (14), November (10), and December (7).



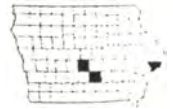
Figure 2. Breeding range (dark area) and recent vagrant records of Common Ground-Dove by state. The numbers indicate the number of records for each state.

The Cedar Rapids bird, officially Iowa's first, fits the vagrancy pattern of this species well for both date and location. It is interesting that another bird of this species showed up at Whitefish Point in northern Michigan on 21 October 1991 (*American Birds* 46:93), just two days after the Iowa bird was first sighted.

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ICELAND GULLS IN IOWA

THOMAS H. KENT



A first-winter/first-summer Iceland Gull at Red Rock Reservoir from 13 to 16 March 1991 provided Iowa's first accepted record of this species. Previous reports of this species had occurred over the years, but the sightings were brief or not recorded in sufficient detail to be sure of the identification, or may have been in Illinois. Here I report on the spring 1991 record and four more records from the winter of 1991-1992.

On 13 March 1991, Tim Schantz found a white-winged gull below the dam at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. The bird was intermediate in size between Ring-billed and Herring gulls, but closer to the latter. On the standing bird, he noted gleaming white primaries that protruded about one inch beyond the tail. In flight, the flight feathers were all white from above and below. The rest of the bird was a mottled or indistinctly flecked off white or very light gray-brown. A mottled tail band was noted. The bill was mostly dark with a light base, the eye dark, and the legs pink. Nine other observers documented this bird over the next three days, and I took photos (Figure 1a and 1b).

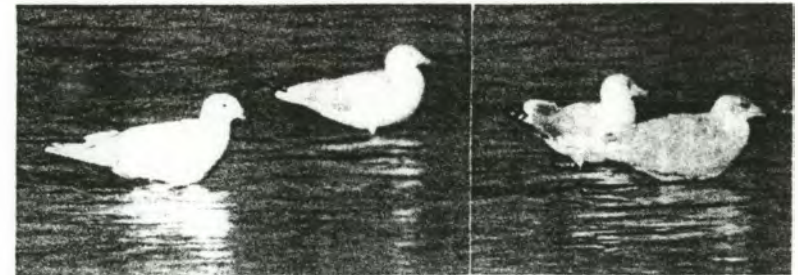


Figure 1a, 1b. Iceland Gull at Red Rock Reservoir, 14 March 1991. Note the more rounded head shape in 1a.

The following details are added from a composite of the other observers. The bill was shorter and thinner than that of Herring Gulls with a smoothly curved distal culmen and minimal gonyl prominence. There was more light color in the lower mandible than the upper, and the demarcation with the black distal part of the bill was indistinct. Some described the head as rounded, others thought it was not. There was a smudge around the eye and some streaking on top of the head. The upper back and upper breast, neck, and parts of the head lacked mottling and appeared white. One observer noted some pale brown on the outer side of the shaft of the distal four or five primaries. The mottled tail band was just slightly darker than the rest of the bird and occupied the distal half of the tail except for a paler, thin terminal band.

Several of the documentors were uncertain of the identification because of the white-headed appearance (suggesting Herring Gull), tail band (more typical of Thayer's Gull), and head shape (better for Herring or Thayer's). The possibilities of leucistic Herring Gull or a hybrid were suggested. The documentations and

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photographs were reviewed by Kevin J. Zimmer, the author of a recent article on Iceland Gull with many excellent photographs (Zimmer 1991), who provided explanations for some of the troublesome features. He noted that head shape depended on posture (Figure 1a vs. 1b), and in some photos the shape was within the range of Iceland Gull. He also pointed out, "The individual variation in incredible, and I've seen many an unquestioned Iceland Gull (presumably males) that were as flat-crowned and large-billed as adjacent Herrings, while others look more like doves." Zimmer suggested that the white appearance of the upper body and neck were due to molting of these feathers to first-summer plumage. The tail band was not a problem at all, because Zimmer's article illustrates that many Iceland Gulls have a light tail band. According to Zimmer, "Points against Thayer's Gull include overall paleness, whiteness of the folded primaries, uniform checkering of the tertials [solid brown in Thayer's], absence of secondary bar, paleness of spread wing tip, and amount of contrast at the base of the bill." A leucistic Herring Gull would be expected to have some features other than the white head and neck to suggest that species. To identify a hybrid, one would have to find features of each parent -- a difficult task. The proposed lumping of Iceland and Thayer's gulls into one species would make the possibility of Iceland-Thayer's hybrid moot.

In the next three paragraphs, I describe three different Iceland Gulls, two in first-winter and one in second-winter plumages. Presumably these were the same birds seen by many observers in Bettendorf and Davenport in January and early February 1992.

On 31 December 1991, I went to Lock and Dam 14 in Scott County in an attempt to add some species to my last-day-of-the-year list. From the lock area, I found a very pale gull flying below the dam. On the flying bird, I noted the following: slightly smaller than Herring Gulls; overall off-white on the wings, body, and tail; light brown, poorly demarcated, subterminal tail band about one-fourth the length of the tail; and all-dark bill. The tail band was similar to that on the Iceland Gull photographed in Scott County on 8 February by Tim Schantz (Figure 2). The underwing was all light, with the flight feathers lighter than the coverts. The upper wing was very uniform and without a hint of a secondary bar. I concluded that it was a first-winter bird because of the uniform coloration without gray on the back or wings and that it was not a Glaucous Gull because of the overall size and all black bill. I was less secure in excluding Thayer's Gull because of the tail band and slight brownish edge to the upper side of the outer two or three primaries that I detected using a telescope. Eventually the bird landed on a pillar and later a Herring Gull landed beside it. Compared to the Herring, the bird was 10% smaller; had a smaller, more rounded head with shorter neck; had a bill three-fourths as long; and had a primary extension of about 1 inch and equal to that of the Herring Gull. On the standing bird, the primaries were light colored and the wing and tail coverts appeared finely vermiculated. Based on the wing tip and faintness of the tail band, I argued against Thayer's Gull. Shortly thereafter, at Lock and Dam 15, I viewed a first-winter Thayer's Gull that was quite different in that it was overall darker, had dark wing tips, and had a much darker and more prominent tail band. I saw the Iceland Gull again on 1 January 1992, still flying below the dam, and it was seen the next day by Jim Fuller, who said that it was easy to pick out because of its "ghostly" appearance. Neither of us saw the leg color well. The eye was dark.

I returned to Lock and Dam 14 on 4 January and found two Iceland Gulls that appeared to be different birds from the one seen on 31 December and 1-2 January. The first was a first-year white-winged gull that I saw around a small area of open water in the backwater, rather than flying below the dam and sitting on pillars as had occurred on the previous days. As I moved up taking photographs, the bird flew away. I did not detect any tail band, but one of my photographs (Figure 3) later showed a faint, broken, narrow, light brown, subterminal tail band. I had noted the overall similarity of size and shape (compared to Herring Gulls) to the bird seen three days before, and also noted pink legs, projecting crossed primaries, and indistinct lightness in the base of the bill. One or more first-winter Iceland Gulls were seen farther south in Scott County from Lock and Dam 15 to Bettendorf/Moline by many observers at least to 9 February.



Figure 2. Iceland Gull in Scott County, 8 February 1992. Note the definite light brown tail band. Photograph by Tim Schantz.



Figure 3. Note the minimal brown edging in the distal tailfeathers of this flying first-winter Iceland Gull at Lock and Dam 14 on 4 January 1992.

On 4 January, after flushing the first-year Iceland Gull, I moved up to look at the gull flock resting on the ice of the backwater. I was surprised to find two white-winged gulls. The second bird had a uniform light-gray back and scapulars and a bill that was dark at the tip and light at the base. In flight, the light gray of the back and scapulars contrasted with the off-white of the upper wing surface. I also noticed a light, smudgy, gray-brown, subterminal tail band that occupied about one-fourth of the tail. Otherwise, this second-year Iceland Gull was similar in size, shape, and proportions to the first-winter bird. I did not see this bird again, but others reported a second-year bird downstream, and Tanya Bray (personal communication) saw a second-year bird on 3 February at Bettendorf/Moline.

On 29 February 1992, Bob and John Cecil and I were driving by the marina at Saylorville Reservoir when Bob saw a white-winged gull on the shoreline. We had heard of a Glaucous Gull being seen earlier in the day, but this bird was not much larger than the Ring-billed Gulls it was with and the bill appeared to be of uniform thickness and all dark. It was slightly longer and distinctly bulkier bodied than the Ring-billed Gulls. Overall it was very light brown with white primaries extending beyond the tail. Bob noted faint scaling on the wings and barring on the tail coverts. We left briefly to get Bob Myers and Maridel Jackson. Cecil and Myers thought the legs had a yellowish cast, but I judged them to be pinkish. I climbed down the bank to photograph the bird (Figure 4) and it eventually flew, revealing all light wing surfaces above and below. Cecil noted that the wings were broader than those of Ring-billed Gulls. I did not hear of any further reports of this bird.

How could I see five and photograph four Iceland Gulls in Iowa in less than one year's time? Did this same phenomenon occur in nearby states? Iceland Gulls

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were reported in small numbers along all of the Great Lakes in the winter of 1991-92 (*American Birds* Regional Reports).

Having minimal experience with Iceland Gull prior to these sightings, I was under the impression from reading that identification might be difficult. The recent article by Zimmer was very timely and helpful with some difficult field marks. Zimmer emphasizes the extremely variable tail band in first- and second-year birds. The illustrations are helpful in translating concepts, such as rounded head and long primary extension, into real situations; however, these marks are still not easy to interpret. When comparing my photographs of the March 1991 bird at Red Rock Reservoir with Zimmer's photos, I was unsure whether the head



Figure 4. First-winter Iceland Gull at Saylorville Reservoir on 29 February 1992.

I was unsure whether the head shape fit or not, but Zimmer, with his experience, thought they did. In looking at the isolated Iceland Gull on the pillar at Lock and Dam 14, I could not decide about head and bill shape until a Herring Gull landed next to the bird in question; only then did these field marks become obvious by comparison. With each succeeding sighting, the identification became easier and more obvious. I was also impressed that these birds were cooperative and seen by many observers; whereas, past reports of this species were fleeting and not described in detail.

Both Thayer's and Iceland gulls nest in the eastern nearctic region, and undoubtedly there is some interbreeding. Most Thayer's Gull migrate to the West Coast, but some, especially first-year birds, migrate/winter across the entire United States. Most Iceland Gulls migrate to Europe or the East Coast of North America, but a few of any age occur on the Great Lakes each year, and there are rare scattered individual records farther west.

These observations of the Iceland Gull may soon be moot. It is rumored that Iceland and Thayer's gulls are about to be deemed one species. The Kumlien's subspecies of Iceland Gull is very similar to adult Thayer's Gull, presenting a significant identification problem, particularly in Eastern United States. In Iowa, first-year birds may be more likely and are more easily separated.

What will these "new" birds be called. We may have to speak of "Thayer's-type first-winter Iceland Gulls" or just call them all Iceland Gulls and lose all the valuable information we are getting from the careful documentations by many Iowa observers. I hope we will still consider each gull individually, judging its age and describing each of its feathers and soft parts. Let the species fall where they may!

LITERATURE CITED

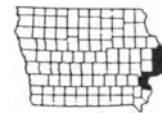
Zimmer, K.J. 1991. Plumage variation in "Kumlien's" Iceland Gull. *Birding* 23:254-269.

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

LATE FALL AND WINTER BIRDING ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN EAST-CENTRAL IOWA

PETER C. PETERSEN

The Mississippi River in the Quad-City area has been a great attraction for gulls in recent years during the winter months. In January and February 1992, nine gull species were recorded just in the Quad-Cities. This article describes some of the best locations to check from November to March



for gulls as well as waterfowl and other winter birds. The route starts at Lock 17 and proceeds north to Lock 12 (Figure 1). All along the route, the Mississippi River is a good reference point to help keep you oriented. However, keep in mind that the river does not always flow south. Between Muscatine and Clinton it flows west or southwest, making it easy to get disoriented.

From the Illinois side of the Mississippi, Lock 17 (1) is reached by going north from New Boston on the Great River Road and turning west at the Lock 17 sign about one mile north of New Boston. Lock 17 is not a good concentration point for gulls or diving ducks, but dabbling ducks often linger into late December. They feed in the corn fields and are usually seen late in the day. Bald Eagles are present in good numbers at the lock and west end of Route 17 in New Boston.

On the Iowa side of the Mississippi River, Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge lies adjacent to Lock 17. Access is limited during the waterfowl season in November and December. For access, check with the refuge personnel at the refuge office, R. R. #1, Box 75, Wapello, IA 52653, (phone 319-523-6982).

Lock 16 (2) is reached by going east from IL 92 just on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River bridge at Muscatine. The lock can also be viewed in Iowa from the southern end of Park Street on the east side of Muscatine. Take Route 92 across the river into Muscatine and turn right at the intersection with Routes 22 and 61. In a few blocks this road angles to the left and becomes Park Street. Lock 16 is not a gathering spot for gulls, but often has large numbers of Bald Eagles. A good location for woodland and coniferous species in Muscatine is Greenwood Cemetery (3), 1814 Lucas Street. Stay on Route 61 to where it intersects the Muscatine bypass. Follow the bypass to the west and south. Shortly after it crosses Route 22 it intersects Lucas Street. Proceed into town on Lucas; the cemetery is on the right in about 1.5 miles. Pine Grosbeaks have been found here, and Winter Wrens are often found in the cemetery's ravines.

From Muscatine, proceed toward Davenport on Route 22 which leaves Park at Washington Street. About eight miles east of Muscatine turn left on the county road marked for Wildcat Den State Park (4). At the park, the trail along Pine Creek from the ranger's house to the creek picnic grounds, about one mile long, is usually the most productive. Birds expected in winter include Winter and Carolina wrens, Wild Turkey, and Pileated Woodpecker.

Return to Route 22 and continue toward Davenport. Watch for Bald Eagles along the river to the Davenport city limit at Utah Avenue. Turn right (south) on Utah to South Concord Street and then proceed east along the river and Credit Island Harbor (5), watching for ducks, gulls, and Bald Eagles. To reach Fairmont Cemetery (6), an area similar to Greenwood Cemetery in Muscatine, turn left on Route 61 and proceed to Rockingham Road (Route 22). Turn right (east) and drive toward the city about four blocks to the cemetery. The

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Thomas H. Kent, Secretary
 IOU Records Committee
 211 Richards Street
 Iowa City, IA 52246
 December 16, 1991

Dear Tom:

First let me say that the gull record you sent my way is an interesting and difficult case. One only has to read through the differing opinions in the enclosed correspondence (many from people who actually saw the bird) to see what a problem these birds can be. It is doubly hard to make an identification from photos alone, many of which fail to show critical detail. Given these complexities, I would be hard-pressed to definitively label this particular bird. However, I can offer my opinion based on available evidence, and offer comments on other opinions already expressed in the correspondence.

If I had to call this bird something, I would call it an Iceland Gull in transition from first-winter to first-summer plumage. I have labeled each of your photos on the back with a number (in pencil) to give us a reference point in the discussion to follow. I am bothered some by the seeming build of the bird (particularly head shape and relative bill size)-- in photo #2 and to a lesser extent #7 it looks flat-crowned and long-billed. However, were I to look solely at photo #1 I would have no problem with the bird being an Iceland Gull. As one of the observers pointed out, apparent structural features of these gulls can change greatly with posture and which feather groups are erected at any given time. Also, the individual variation is incredible, and I've seen many an unquestioned Iceland Gull (presumably males) that were as flat-crowned and large-billed as adjacent Herrings, while others look more like doves. I think it important to note that in many of these photos the gull in question looks big mainly because it is adjacent to Ring-bills. Size is not helpful here in separating Iceland from Thayer's -- both will look larger than Ring-billeds and smaller than most Herrings, and in any event, the amount of overlap between thayeri and kumlieni is extreme. I am not even convinced that size allows us to completely rule out a small Glaucous Gull, although the consensus of all observers that the bird was smaller than all of the nearby Herrings is certainly suggestive.

Bruce Peterjohn's point that the photos may involve two birds (flight shots versus others) is well taken. However, even if all of the photos are of the same bird, I do not agree with his line of reasoning. The presence of a tail band does not constitute a major problem. Many Icelanders show a seemingly solid band (although close range will reveal much internal mottling-- none of the photos help us on this point), albeit not a dark one. Photo #5 shows the band to be concolor with the mantle, and much lighter than the band of a nearby Herring. The band may appear darker than it is because of contrast with

the whiter uppertail/rump. This contrast is not typically apparent on first-winter Iceland Gulls (which have barring and mottling at the base of the tail), but it does become increasingly apparent as the bird progresses toward second-winter plumage. Given that these photos were taken in mid-March I do not find it unusual that such contrast would be present. Likewise, the date could readily account for the whiter look to the head and underparts. Bruce is correct in stating that such contrast is more typical of first-winter Herring and that Iceland Gulls and Thayer's are more uniform in that plumage. However, given the date, this bird should be well on its way toward first-summer plumage, and it is typical for molt to progress from the head back. I do think that the tail band (along with bill coloration and overall size) allows us to safely eliminate Glaucous Gull from consideration, but I do not find it to be a problem in considering Iceland.

I see nothing about the plumage of the bird in photos #1-3 and #7 that would rule against it being an Iceland Gull. The only negative is the seemingly whiter head and underparts (part of which may result from overexposure), an issue dealt with above. The folded primary pattern looks typical of many first-year kumlien, as do the tertials, which appear uniformly checkered (hard to see well in the photos)-- a point against Herring and Thayer's. Photos #2 and 7 show a dark smudge anterior to the eye, a feature seen in many first-year Iceland Gulls. Bill color is also suggestive. This bird lacks the bright pink-and-black bill with the neatly dipped-in-ink look of a first-year Glaucous. It does show more contrast than most first-winter Iceland Gulls, but again, I feel this is because of the advanced date. If anything, I would expect a Thayer's at this same age to be more dark-billed with only slight amounts of pink at the base. Primary projection appears typical for Iceland, while not ruling anything else out. Nothing in the flight shots or the written descriptions of the wing pattern points away from Iceland.

Points against Thayer's Gull include overall paleness, whiteness of the folded primaries, uniform checkering of the tertials, absence of a secondary bar, paleness of the spread wingtip, and amount of contrast at the base of the bill. I see no evidence in the photos or written descriptions of any unusual patterns of wear or molt -- questions raised by Bruce. I think it less likely for the bird to be an unusually small Herring Gull (smaller than all of the other Herrings present by as much as 10%) that also has exceptionally pale body plumage, a very pale tail band, no secondary bar, white primaries, checkered tertials, and no apparent signs of unusual molt or wear than to believe that it is simply a vagrant Iceland Gull. Note also the lack of contrast between inner and outer primaries of the spread wing. While such things as worn birds, hybrids, and partially leucistic individuals must always be considered, we

must also realize that statistically, some of these combinations (eg. a partially leucistic bird that is distinctly smaller than average for members of its species) are even less likely than a vagrant to occur. The question of hybridization is a sticky one. The bird in question does not exhibit the dark wingtips that I would expect from a Glaucous X Herring hybrid, nor does it fit other combinations (as Bruce also pointed out). The issue of intergradation between Thayer's and Iceland has no simple solution, and I'm not sure that we can ever safely say a bird is 100% pure anything.

I would conclude by saying that based on the evidence, I think the bird in question is an Iceland Gull. If I were able to view it in the field I may have a different conclusion. But, based on photos and descriptions I think kumlieni is the identification with the fewest problems. Consultation of the article in Birding may help in elaborating on some of the points contained in this letter.

If anything additional surfaces, let me know. I hope this was of some help.

Sincerely,

Kevin

Kevin J. Zimmer
1665 Garcia
Atascadero, CA. 93422



Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

91-20

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Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

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Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
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Iceland Gull P-0320
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14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

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Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

? Iceland Gull
Red Rock Res., IA
14 Mar 1991
T. H. Kent

91-20

Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

91-20

Iceland Gull P-0320
Red Rock Reservoir, Marion Co.
14 Mar 1991 T. H. Kent

91-20

Rare Bird Report

Species: Iceland Gull (Larus glaucoides)

Location: Below Red Rock Dam, Marion County, Iowa

Date: 13 March 1991

Optics: Zeiss 10 x 40B

Marks: The bird was a first winter bird. in between a Ring-billed and Herring Gull in size. From a distance the bird appeared all white with a slightly darker mantle. Bill mostly dark with a light area to the base of the bill. Eye appeared dark. Gray-brown mottling on a white background on the mantle. Primaries gleaming white. Pink legs. Folded wings extended well beyond the tail in the sitting bird. Tail had a slightly darker tail band that was internally mottled.

Discussion: On the 13th I slipped below the dam to view an incredible number of gulls. Right away this bird caught my attention. My feelings after a quick look were that I was gazing upon an Iceland Gull. Iowa Birds mentions that there is a problem separating Iceland with Thayers. If there was any problem with this bird being anything it was a Glaucous Gull of the same age. However the bird was smaller than the Herring Gulls that were on the roost. Long wings will rule out the rare small race of Glaucous Gull. There are not to many birds that have primaries lighter than the mantle in the sitting bird.

Note: I am submitting some rather distant photos of the bird. Please keep them for the records committee use. Tom Kent has better photographs.

Tim Schantz
309 E Robinson St.
Knoxville, Iowa 50138

speckling on the inner portion of the tail. The legs were a light pink color.

In flight, the bird was a pretty uniform tannish-white, except for two features: (1) There was a very faint tan tail band, which covered about half the tail, and (2) The primaries on the upperwing were the lightest part of the bird, and were translucent.

SIMILAR SPECIES: First winter glaucous gull is larger and has a more obvious two-toned bill. First winter Thayer's gull is a generally darker bird with primaries which are the darkest part of the bird, rather than the lightest, and has no speckling on the tail.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I saw one first winter Iceland Gull at the garbage dump in Superior, Wisconsin in 1988.

REFERENCES and FIELD NOTES: Field notes were prepared immediately, and the National Geographic guide was consulted during the observation period. Field notes were written out the next morning on a plane flight to San Diego, and were typed on March 29.

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Iceland Gull (first-year), 14 March 1991, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion County, Iowa.

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Other observers: Tim Schantz, Jim Fuller, Jim Scheib, Dick Tetrault

Time: 6:55 to 8:15 a.m.

Habitat: River with gravel bars below reservoir dam

Description: The bird is with many Ring-billed Gulls (hundreds) and some Herring Gulls, mostly first-year birds. It is easily smaller than the first-year herrings, but much larger than any of the ring-billeds. The size is consistent as compared to several different ring-billeds and herrings. The primaries on the sitting bird are almost white, perhaps a little edge of tan on some feathers. The primaries consistently extend about one inch beyond the tail. The legs are pink. The wing coverts are lightly scalloped with light tan. The top of the head has some tan streaks and the ear patch is faintly tan. The throat and sides of the neck are whiter. The underparts are more uniform off-white. The tail has a light tannish color to the distal one-third (with a thin terminal lighter band). The tail coverts are not seen well but appear to be flecked with tan. The bill is shorter than that of the Herring Gull, about 10-15%; the bill is very distinctly thinner, about two-thirds as thick. The upper mandible is straight except for the distal fourth, which curves smoothly to a point. There is only a slight gonyl prominence on the lower mandible. The distal half of both mandibles is black (later I saw a paler tip to the bill when the bird turned in the right light). The inner half of the lower mandible is yellow and the upper mandible is flecked or mottled with yellow in this area. There is no sharp demarcation between the distal and proximal bill colors. The inside of the mouth is orange-red. The eye is clearly dark (compared with light of nearby adult Ring-billed Gull). The eye has a small dark beady appearance without an eye ring. At 7:18 we flushed the gulls in order to see the bird in flight again. The primaries and secondaries are entirely translucent from above and below. They are whiter, plainer, and more translucent than the coverts. The coverts as seen in flight are slightly tannish. No secondary bar is seen. The distal one-third of the tail is definitely darker than the proximal part of the tail, darker than any other feathers on the bird. It is, however, a uniform pale tan and not anywhere near as dark as would be expected on a Thayer's Gull. We watched the bird until about 8:15 and saw it fly several times. There may have been some flecking on the tail proximally, but others got a better view of this. The bird landed on the near gravel bar in the open and I took several photos with 420 and 1500 mm lenses.

Behavior: Standing on gravel bar with other gulls and flying. The bird was somewhat aggressive as it poked and chased other gulls.

Conditions: 50 to 70 yards (estimate); partly sunny with sun behind viewers; 10x binocular, Kowa scope, camera lenses.

Similar species: I was convinced that the bird was not a small female Glaucous Gull because of the size of the bird (consistently smaller than Herrings by about 10%); thin, relatively short, pointed bill with faint gonyl angle; lack of distinct dark tip to bill; wings that extended well beyond the tail; and thin, elongated build that was slimmer than Herring Gulls. The main feature that argues against Thayer's Gull is the white primaries as seen from above in flight and on the folded wing when sitting. The faint, but definite, subterminal tail band bothered me; it was darker than any of the photos in Grant. The overall coloration was lighter than any first-year Thayer's Gull that I have seen.

Agreement: Tim Schantz found and identified the bird. I was the only one who expressed any reservations because of the tail band.

Previous experience: I saw one adult near San Diego; I have seen several first-year Glaucous and Thayer's Gulls.

References/time used: We looked at some field guides after making first notes and I looked at Grant and Harrison later.

Time of notes: dictated during observation and copied directly; typed: 24 hours.

8488 Snowden Oaks Place
Laurel, MD 20708
301-497-1629
May 22, 1991

Dear Tom:

My apologies for the tardy response to your letter of April 11, 1991, but as you may be aware, I have recently taken a new job in Maryland and am in the process of moving from Ohio. While this job will hopefully open up some career opportunities that were previously unavailable to me, the process of moving has left my life in disarray for the time being. I am sure that my personal life will eventually get straightend out, but for a while, it is taking me a long time to respond to whatever mail is forwarded to me.

With regards to the spring report for American Birds, I am still the Regional Editor. While I informed them over four months ago that I would need to be replaced, they have not found a replacement at this time. I am not sure that they are even seriously looking for one. In any event, unless you hear otherwise, send your spring report to me at the following address:

Bruce Peterjohn
Breeding Bird Survey
Patuxent Wildlife Research Center
Laurel, MD 20708

While I firmly believe that the Regional Editor should be an active birder in their Region, I will try to do as good a job as possible under these circumstances.

Onto the gull identification problem posed by your letter. At the outset, I must admit that I am not sure that the gull photographed in flight is the same one that was on the ground. The head, neck, and mantle appear to be more uniform on the bird in flight while the one on the ground has a mottled mantle and a fairly white neck and head, indicating it may be a different individual. I cannot resolve this particular question, but I have doubts that only one bird was photographed.

Assuming that only one bird was involved, the dark tail band would eliminate a pure Iceland Gull. This species has an uniformly barred tail, but would never give the impression of a distinct tail band. Only Herring and Thayer's gulls would exhibit such a pattern. An Iceland X Thayer's hybrid would exhibit mixed characteristics such as a defined tail band at the center of the tail while the margins would be barred, but such patterns could be discerned only with careful study at close range. However, such a tail pattern would appear as a dark band at a distance. Other birds identified as hybrids have had bazarre tail patterns such as a dark band across the center of the tail with broad white bands at the base and tip. In any event, the described tail pattern would eliminate Iceland from consideration.

My gut reaction from the photos of the bird on the ground is that it is a worn or possibly leucistic Herring Gull. The mottled back contrasting with the lighter head and neck certainly fit that species. First-year Thayer's and Iceland Gulls would never have such an appearance but would be uniformly colored above and below. In fact, they are most readily located by their uniform coloration as opposed to the variety of mottled patterns exhibited by Herring Gulls. When you go to Churchill this summer, study the gulls at the dump and you will see what I mean.

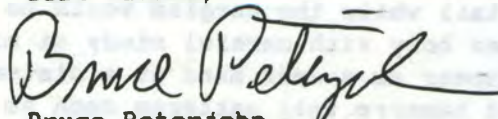
The whitish primaries could be a result of feather wear, a regular problem with young gulls. Such wear can present a variety of patterns. This spring, I saw a young Herring Gull with a white wing stripe similar to a Willet, and other bizarre patterns have been reported. So white primaries by themselves do not necessarily indicate any species, especially in spring and early summer when feather wear must be taken into consideration.

The other characteristics fit a Herring Gull. The tail band would be indicative of that species, and to my eye, the bill appears to be relatively heavy. I would say that the bird on the ground was a female (based on the more rounded head and shorter bill), which would explain why it appeared to be smaller than other Herring Gulls in the area. I guess a Herring X something hybrid is always a possibility on these odd-appearing gulls, but this bird really does not exhibit the mixed characteristics I would expect on a hybrid. In short, my vote is for a worn Herring Gull.

If you do not subscribe to the British publication Birding World, I can send you a copy of an article published in its most recent issue which has some good pictures and description of a hybrid Thayer's X Iceland gull. Let me know if you are interested.

Otherwise, hope you had an interesting spring migration in Iowa. I do not have the faintest idea what was seen in Ohio or elsewhere in the Region, but I will hear about it all shortly. Spring is a fairly dull season on the Atlantic Coast, except for shorebirds on Delaware Bay. During the past two weekends, I have seen a total of 4 Curlew Sandpipers and 3+ Ruffs at Bombay Hook, the only decent birds I have seen this spring. Then again, I have not gotten out anywhere near as much as I would have liked. If you are ever in the Maryland area, be sure to give me a call. I have plenty of room and there are some excellent birding areas within a two hours drive.

Best Wishes,


Bruce Peterjohn

curving down the neck. In flight the outer primaries and secondaries were a brilliant white, contrasting with the grayish cast to the saddle and wing coverts. From below the flight feathers were a bright, translucent white while the inner wing linings were darker and contrasting but not quite to the same extent as a Thayer's Gull. The tail coverts were white barred with gray and the tail feathers themselves consisted of pale gray centers surrounded by white. These gray centers gave the bird a semblance of a light tail band, but the terminal band was bright white.

It was not harrassed by other gulls while eating, and although it showed some curiosity and looked around at the sparring matches going on, in the 3+ hours I spent observing the bird, I never saw it aggressively chasing another gull to steal a fish. This bird tended to hang at the outer edges of the roosting flock, occasionally going into the water to grab a fish which it would bring back to the island to eat.

Similar species and how eliminated: Thayer's Gull, while similar from below with its translucent flight feathers and darker wing linings, was eliminated based on the overall white color, white primaries from above, light gray tail band, and colder, grayer barring. The only other white-winged gull, the Glaucous, should appear larger than the Herring and much more massive overall. In order to eliminate a small Glaucous, and satisfy my concern with what appeared as a pale gray tail band, raising the possibility of hybridization, I consulted Grant's Gulls and some of my further observations were to validate the differences outlined. In the section entitled "Identification Pitfalls", Grant says that "immatures...often show a tail band or secondary bar of uniform coloration of similar tone to the rest of the upperparts." Although the tail band's gray color was accentuated by the gleaming white of the terminal band, it was the approximate color of the gray barring on the body. Grant also says that hybridization between Herring and Iceland has not been proven, so any hybrid would probably be Herring/Glaucous. Any such hybrid should certainly be as large as the Herrings and would show some darker feathering on the primaries, secondaries, or tail. A leucistic form of any other gull would certainly show some characteristic of a normal form of its species. I eliminated Glaucous Gull based on the following: 1) size; 2) primary projection; 3) basic body structure; 4) colder buffy coloration; and 5) bill structure and coloration. Many of the differences are certainly subjective and dependent on the posture and positioning of the bird. The bill, with its shorter, thinner look and less pronounced gonys and the coloration, is perhaps the clincher as it fits perfectly for a first winter Iceland Gull.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? The people I was with observing the bird did not seem to have reservations, although I understand that there have been some from others. See above discussion for personal reservations.

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): I observed the bird on three different days and at different times of day, but at all times the sky was clear to partly cloudy and bright with the sun shining at different angles and creating good lighting conditions. The bird was observed at two different locations at approximately 250 feet (based on scope reading) through 7x26 binoculars and scope at 15x-30x.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: The only other Iceland Gull I have seen was in flight in Minnesota. I have observed a number of Glaucous and other gulls in Iowa in recent years.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS Guide, Harrison's Seabirds, and Grant's Gulls

How long before field notes made? Notes were dictated during observation on all three days **How long before this form completed?** Documentation was completed one day after final observation

91-20

feather shaft. This pattern sometimes created a light-dark-light effect on each primary, evident only in flight. The undersides of the flight feathers were very pale, and I thought I could detect darker markings near the tips of some of the outer primaries. The wing linings contrasted strongly with the pale undersides of the flight feathers. The mantle and rump were the same color as the inner wing, and were also marked with darker spots. The tail pattern was distinctive; narrow white tip, broad, light brown subterminal band, and white uppertail broadly marked with brown feather edgings, creating a scaly appearance to the uppertail. The pale brown tail band was faint, but quite well-defined.

I have relied extensively on Grant (1986) and Kaufman (1990) for plumage descriptions of first-winter Iceland and Thayer's gulls. Unfortunately, these two sources contradict each other on several key points. Kaufman notes that *Kumlien's* Iceland Gulls in first-winter plumage are usually darker-billed, although some show a contrasting gray or grayish-green base to the bill. He notes that, "Icelands with sharply contrasting pink and black bills that appear to be first-year birds are likely to be second-winter *Kumlieni* that have yet to attain their gray mantles." Grant notes that "Bill usually all-black (not pale-based as on typical *Glaucoides*)." Both Grant and Kaufman indicate that first-winter Thayer's Gulls can exhibit pale color at the base of the bill after January/February. The bird in question had a pale-based bill, but lacked a clear gray mantle. Depending on which of the above sources you believe, the bird could have been either a Thayer's or and Iceland gull.

Determining the exact identity of this bird will not be easy. Identification as an Iceland Gull is supported by this bird's size, overall pale body coloration, wingtips that were distinctly paler than the rest of the wing, and color pattern of the bill. The strengths for identification as a Thayer's Gull are head shape, bill size and structure, possibly leg color, and presence of a distinct tail band.

On 3 Apr 1991, while birding the upper end of Saylorville Reservoir, I noticed a pale, white-winged gull resting with several Herrings Gulls on a mudbar. I watched the bird from a distance of 75 yards from 10:42-11:35 a.m. The bird had a plumage identical to the bird described above; in fact, I am sure it was the same individual reported at Red Rock Reservoir. I have a hard time believing two such distinctive gulls could be wandering around in central Iowa. Besides, Saylorville Reservoir is probably in the flight path of most of the gulls leaving Red Rock for points north. I once again noted that this bird was smaller than Herring Gulls. I double-checked the wing pattern, and found it to be just as I described above. All other features were also consistent with those described above.

Similar species and how eliminated: There are several possibilities for a pale, first-winter gull of this size; Herring, Thayer's, Glaucous, Iceland, and Glaucous-winged gulls. Glaucous-winged Gull is a larger, bulkier bird, has a more massive, all-dark bill, lacks a darker subterminal tail band in first- and second-winter plumages, and, when perched, shows a wingtip which is the same color as or slightly darker than the rest of the wing. Glaucous Gull is also larger, has a well-defined bicolored bill, and lacks any tail band. Herring Gull has contrasting darker primaries with a pale "window" on inner primaries, duller pink legs, a contrasting lighter head (usually), obviously darker wingtip when perched, entirely dark tail, and visible darker markings on the underside of the flight feathers. Iceland Gull can be eliminated based on several features (discussed above). These include the fairly flat head profile, larger bill, pale brown tail band, pattern of darker markings on primaries, and bright pink legs seen on this bird.

Optical equipment and viewing conditions: I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope. Viewing conditions were excellent with clear sky and sun behind us. Estimated viewing distance was 75 yards.

References consulted: Grant Gulls: A guide to identification and NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

Previous experience with species: Extensive experience with Herring Gulls. Some experience with Thayer's Gulls from Iowa. Very familiar with Iceland Gulls (Kumlien's race *L. g. kumlieni*), from Massachusetts.

How long before field notes written? written during observation

How long before this form completed? 2 days

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? yes
 If yes, explain: I was told it was an Iceland Gull and I expect that
 there is still much disagreement.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical
 equipment: Had light behind us, fairly clear day and lighting was
 reasonably good (no heat waves). Bird was maybe 100 yards away,
 viewed with 20 power scope

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:
 Have not seen Thayer's Gull before and have had limited experience
 with Iceland Gull. Saw several in Massachusetts
 References and persons consulted before writing description:
 Looked at Natl. Geographic guide and Grant's book on gulls; did not
 have any field guide in the field with me

How long before field notes made? taken in field
 this form completed? filled out 4 days later

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? yes
 If yes, explain: I was told it was an Iceland Gull and I expect that
 there is still much disagreement.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical
 equipment: Had light behind us, fairly clear day and lighting was
 reasonably good (no heat waves). Bird was maybe 100 yards away,
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How long before field notes made? taken in field
 this form completed? filled out 4 days later

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

Record No. 1456

4 Ltr Code ICGU

Documentation of Iowa Sighting

NGS-152 / G-140 / PE-84 / AMG(II)-62 / BH-172

91-20

First Name	Iceland			Notes	
Last Name	Gull (first winter)				
Sci Name	Larus glaucooides				
How many?	1	Date	3/15/91		
City		St/Prov	IA		
Co.	Marion	Nation	USA		
Place Code	RED	Red Rock Reservoir			
Hab. Code	R	River			
St. Life List	Yes	N.A. Life List	Yes		
Flag 1	Yes	Flag 2	Yes		

Description from my notes, made while bird was in view. Parts in parentheses are being added from memory as I write this report on 3/23/91.

(On the gravel bar below the dam at Red Rock was a large assembly of gulls: mostly ring-billed, a few herring, two Thayer's, and this Iceland. (The Iceland gull is) mostly beige, a mottled, light beige brown, very light, with a dark eye. The primary tips are very white. Bird is very light on the neck, with very slightly more tone on the face. (Upper breast also very light, with the light beige tone more pronounced on the lower part of the breast and the belly, as well as on the back, wings, and tail). It is warmer toned than the herring and ring-billed gulls.

It is (much) bigger than the ring-billed gulls. It is slightly smaller than the herring gulls. (This is apparent) when (the bird is standing right) next to a herring gull. (Also apparent when the Iceland is) next to a herring gull: Iceland's head is smaller than the herring gull's; the Iceland's bill is shorter and thinner (than the herring gull's) and is not as thick at the thick place near the end. The head is small and neat, with a rounded forehead (compared to herring gulls'). The neck is more slender (than the herring gulls') in comparison to its size.

The primaries extend well beyond the tail when the bird is at rest. This bird just LOOKS DIFFERENT from the herring gulls. I did not get it next to Thayers', but it is much lighter all over, especially on the primaries.

Viewing conditions, etc.

I watched the gull for about an hour in the late afternoon. It's hard to judge the distance, but it was on a gravel bar near the north bank of the dam's tail waters, and I was on the bank. It was close enough to see the details easily.

Equipment: Leica 10X40 binocs; Kowa scope. Lighting: bright but overcast, then becoming dusk. Other observers: Ann Johnson, Beth Brown, Tim Schantz, Michael Porter. We all agreed that this was an Iceland gull. Standard field guides and P. J. Grant's Gulls ID book were consulted before, during, and after viewing the gull.

91-20

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species Iceland Gull - I thinkLocation below dam - Red Rock

Habitat _____

Date(s) 3/15/91 Time 9:45 am to 10:30 am.Name and Address Jim Sinclair

Other observers _____

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under-tail, legs, feet). Also mention behavior and voice.

Intermediate in size between Herring and Ring-billed Gulls.
 Very stocky body and neck.
 wing tips appeared tapered - wings extended 1-2 in beyond tail
 Bill black with grayish base - particularly the lower mandible
 Eye dark. Noticeable triangular outline in auricular area
 Top and back of head, neck, mantle, upper wing a uniform light
 buff with light indistinct gray-brown mottling.
 Upper tail light cream with a broad, lightly mottled but
 distinct tail band, same color as mantle
 Throat, breast and belly cream colored.
 legs and feet were dark pink
 Bird appeared aggressive - pursuing and stealing fish from ring-bills

Similar species and how eliminated:

Herring Gull - bird was smaller with distinctive chunky body

Glaucous Gull - small size of bill

Thayer's Gull - lack of contrast on wings - head was not proportionally small

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? no - yes (maybe)

If yes, explain:

The tail band and stocky body were slightly disconcerting

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical

equipment: Bird seen both flying and sitting.

60 to 90 yds - overcast

Discoverer scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen species before

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Seabirds - Harrison

MS - Birds of N.A.

How long before field notes made? 10 min. How long before this form

completed? 4 hours

What species? Iceland Gull - (1st winter) How many? 1Location? Below the dam at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion Co.Type of habitat? Gravel bar below spillwayWhen? date(s): March 16, 1991 time: 4:30 p.m. to 5:40 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Tim Schantz, Ann Johnson, Tom Kent, Steve Dinsmore
Jim Fuller, Armstrongs

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

We spotted this whitish-looking gull on the gravel bar. This whitish gull had light buffy-brown mottling all over its body including the top of the head, back, wings, and tail. It was much bigger than Ring-Billed Gull and a little smaller than a Herring Gull in size. It had pink legs, dark eye, and a dark bill. The tip of the bill was black and the inner $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{5}{8}$ of the bill was charcoal gray. The bill was a bit smaller-looking than a 1st winter Herring Gull's bill nearby. An adult Herring Gull beside the Iceland Gull seemed noticeably larger with a larger bill. The head appeared rounded ~~and~~ compared with a 1st winter Herring Gull which had a flattened look. The tail appeared mottled just like the back when it spread its wings once while on the gravel bar.

(Continued on back)

Similar species and how eliminated: A Glaucous Gull has a pink bill with a sharply defined black tip, is larger in size than Iceland and Herring Gulls, has a bulky head and bill, and wing tips at rest can extend beyond tail a distance no greater than bill length.
(Continued on back)

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? I did a bit.If yes, explain: The light brownish terminal band-look on the upper tail gave me some questions, but after reading my guides and especially Kenn Kaufman I feel good that this is an Iceland Gull.Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:It was cloudy and good viewing. Distances estimated at 30-40 yards,8X30 Binocs and 22X Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

One Iceland-(2nd yr.) in Canada, a number of Glaucous and Thayer's Gulls,

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Kaufman's Advanced Birding, Seabirds, Audubon's Master Guide set, Natl. Geog., Peterson's guide, Robbins' guideHow long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? March 23, 1991

The Iceland Gull flew back and forth several times, 91-20. The upper wings were all uniform in coloration from the axillaries to the wing tips — there were no lighter areas on the wings and no dark areas on the wings. The underwings were light from the body through the secondaries and primaries to the wing tips, with a darker wing lining area showing. When seen in flight, the tail looked all light on the underneath side. The upper tail was light with a noticeable narrow light-brownish terminal tail band — look to it. When the bird was on the gravel bar, its wing tips extended a ways beyond the tail tip and seemed to be more than a bill's length in distance.

Similar Species:

A 1st winter Glaucous-winged Gull has a black bill and is uniformly pale gray-brown to whitish with little mottling or contrast; primaries are the same color as the mantle and not translucent.

A 1st winter Thayer's Gull has an all black bill, a dark-light-dark pattern to the flight feathers, and a darker body plumage. The primaries are darker above than mantle and the gull has a solid gray or brown subterminal tail band.

From Kenn Kaufman's Advanced Birding Comparing 1st winter Thayer's and Iceland Gulls:

"whatever the shade of brown (of a Thayer's Gull), the visual effect will remain that of a wide, darker tail band contrasting with a paler and mottled rump and uppertail coverts.

This effect should aid in distinguishing Thayer's from Iceland Gull, which typically has a very pale tail with fine barring on each feather in the manner of Glaucous Gull. Occasional darker Iceland's with heavier tail barring may give the impression of having a distinct band due to convergence of the bars. Even when a band is present, however, it contains internal mottling and is pale in comparison." — (pages 119-120).

"Iceland's also lack the secondary bar seen in Thayer's. The wingtips of Iceland's are usually noticeably paler than the rest of the wing (not slightly darker as in a Thayer's). Some Iceland's will have a contrasting grayish base to the bill, whereas all Thayer's have entirely black bills. Iceland is generally paler/buffier in overall color." — (pages 123-124).

"... the pattern of the secondaries (of a Thayer's Gull) (as viewed from above) is one of a broad and distinct, but broken, dark bar across the trailing edge of the wing. This character is important in distinguishing Thayer's from Iceland Gull, which shows no such secondary bar. Iceland's have uniformly pale upperwings that are, if anything, lighter on the primaries." — (page 122).

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

91-20

What species? Iceland Gull, 1st winter How many? 1Location? Red RockType of habitat? tailwaters below dam, gravel barWhen? date(s): March 16, 1991 time: 4:30 to 5:40Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdtothers with you: Mark Proescholdt

others before or after you: _____

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Mark spotted the gull on a gravel bar among the several hundred gulls. This bird stood out by its size (smaller than Herring, larger than Ring-billed) & by its coloring. A really pale gull, the off-white color was mottled lightly with soft buff over back, wings, wing coverts & tail with light (almost white) underparts & faint mottling on upper belly. White wing tips showed when bird was at rest, wings longer than tail. It had black eyes, & black bill fading into charcoal-gray at base (which along with smaller size eliminated Glaucous Gull which has only a black-tipped bill. Also Thayer's Gull bills are entirely black). Legs & feet were pink. Its head which was slightly mottled was smaller & more rounded than an adjacent (over)

Similar species and how eliminated: Thayer's Gull, Glaucous Gull - explained above

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? yes, at first

If yes, explain: I wanted to be sure it wasn't a Thayer's

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

sun, through clouds, at side, good lighting - 30-40 yards -

Nikon 8x30 binocs, Bushnell Spacemaster 22 w scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I saw one in Churchill along Hudson Bay, but that was an adult

References and persons consulted before writing description: Guides - Natl Geog, Peterson, Robbin, also Audubon's Master Guide & Kenn Kaufman's Advanced Pictorial

How long before field notes made? made as we this form completed? March 27, 1991

watched bird

Harrison's "Seabirds"

What species? Iceland Gull - (1st winter) How many? 1Location? Below the dam at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion Co.Type of habitat? Gravel bar below spillwayWhen? date(s): March 16, 1991 time: 4:30 p.m. to 5:40 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Tim Schantz, Ann Johnson, Tom Kent, Steve Dinsmore

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

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