

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, *Larus marinus*

Peter H. Yaukey

February 22, 1992, on the sandflat on the bank of the Mississippi River at Nine Mile Point, across the levee from the electricity generating plant, Jefferson Parish.

The following is a verbatim quote (though clarifying abbreviations, etc.) of my field notes from the time; I did not indicate what date they were written, but it is my custom to write details on the day of the sighting and the amount of detail provided indicates that this was so for this observation as well. I have no idea what references I consulted.

"Gull, 30-50 meters, 8x40 binocs, looking NW, 1030 AM, in binocs 15 min- compared to Herring Gulls in same view (also first winter), whiter head (essentially pure white, perhaps dusky below and behind eye slightly), contrasting more with dark eye area; blacker and heavier beak. Strikingly larger than all Herrings that came close to it (ca. 8 individuals), and wings a more crisp and more internally contrasting dark and white checkering when folded. Back feathers dark with white edges, fading to indistinct brownish at base of nape. White nape and neck, flecked lightly with darker on breast and belly; pretty clean white behind the pink legs. Folded and flying tail very white (pure?) on base, still white on rump but lots of flecks. Black tip to tail in flight, with tip breaking up into flecks (looks different than Herring) before turning white toward base. Folded wingtips and tertials blackish, the latter with conspicuous white edges. Beak may have been wholly black- almost so if not. Dorsal wings in flight were silvery (due to checkering) on inner wing with black trailing edge; black primaries were slightly paler in inner part of outer wing, but strikingly less so than on Herring, so that outer wing was striking more uniformly dark."

The bird is separable from Herring by the larger, blacker beak; checkered upperparts; larger size; fainter pale window on inner primaries; and white tail base and ground color to rump. The large size, heavy beak, and somewhat pale inner primaries distinguish it from Lesser Black-backed. Kelp should be notably smaller than this bird; Harrison's (*Seabirds: An Identification Guide*) description suggests that first winter Kelp would also have less contrasting internal feather markings on the wing coverts and back, and a darker tail; I have read two other references that describe it as having grayer (maybe browner) legs. I have seen thousands of Great Black-backed, of all ages, in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, and elsewhere on the East Coast and ~~some~~ ^{one} in Louisiana.

I am sure of this observation.

Peter Yaukey 2/8/00
Peter Yaukey 2/29/00 (re-signed when
 photocopied notes onto back side)

2/22/92 GBBG - Gull, 30-50m, 8x40 binocs,
looking NW, 1030 AM, in binocs 15 min -
compared to HEGus in same view (also
1st w), whiter head (even. pure white,
perhaps dusky below + behind eye
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Strikingly larger than all HEGu that
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