

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

1 adult, sex unknown

Lafourche Parish, near 29.14 N, 90.13 W and also ene of there.

This is the beach west of Elmer\'s Island, east of Bay Champagne

6 Feb. 2010 during winter plover surveys with BTNEP

appx. 11:45am-12:00pm

B. Mac. Myers III

Eunice, LA 70535

Other observers accompanying reporter who

also identified the bird(s): Richard DeMay, and Dean Blanchard was operating the boat

Melvin Weber was walking on shore, and first found the bird. He originally thought it was LBBG. Not sure if he concurs in i.d. as GBBG

Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): we were looking n-nw, sun behind us. Good light, but very strong, harsh, bright sunlight

Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 10x42 Eagle optics, very good

Distance: mostly 80-100yds?

Duration: about 15 minutes

Habitat: gulf beach; part of the time at a dead fish (probably redfish or black drum)

Behavior: standing, walking, picking at dead fish; one time flew out over the water ahead of us affording good views of wing pattern; I did not notice it interacting with nearby Herring Gulls

Description: It was a large, bulky gull. The head appeared all white. Eye color not discerned. The back and mantle appeared very dark, darker than in most of my photos. Underparts white. Bill appeared large and stout, was yellow with some red near gonys. The legs appeared dull pink, and perhaps the webs of feet were brighter(?). Due to distance, very strong light, and rocking of boat I can not say absolutely that it could not have had some streaking on the head, but I did not see any. Likewise, I could not get detailed impression of size and shape and marking of bill or of precise shade of leg/foot color. One time the bird flew out over the water and wheeled in front of us at fairly close range as it flew west. The mantle appeared very dark without much contrast with the wingtips. I had excellent views of the upper surface of the left wing. The bird had the \"classic\" GBBG pattern of a rather long oblong spot on p-10 and a somewhat smaller oblong white mirror on p-9. The underside of the flight feathers appeared to be quite dark, from primaries entirely or nearly so dark, narrowing down along secondaries. The tail was white and unmarked.

Voice: not heard

Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): I think that all other species can be eliminated by size, coloration of plumage and soft parts, and especially by the spotting pattern of upper surface of outer primaries. The only problem would be some sort of hybrid, especially HERGxGBBG. Melvin originally thought the bird might be LBBG. It is certainly not that. In the field the back and mantle appeared darker than in most of my photographs. The legs and feet appeared very slightly pinker than I might expect in GBBG. But, in both cases, the extremely strong light could have been a factor. I'd expect a hybrid to show some streaking on head/nape, but again the extremely bright light could have caused that to wash out, especially given the distance and rocking of boat.

Photographs or tape recordings obtained? Richard DeMay took a bunch of photos which I've not seen. Perhaps they'll be of value in evaluating the possibility of hybrid origin.

I've looked at the GBBGxHERG photos in Howell and Dunn, H6.1 through H7.4. I have to say that our bird looked much more like GBBG than it did any of the hybrids pictured. I note that H6.2 shows a primary spotting pattern like GBBG and like our bird. But I also note that some of the adult GBBG photos show pink degree of legs/feet similar to our bird. And all of the hybrids shown seemed to be lighter than our bird on the mantle. I am sending several photos to Paul Conover. They have been cropped and resized but not otherwise modified. Richard DeMay took a bunch, too, and I'll email him to ask that he send some of the better ones to the LBRC

Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification): None at the time. After getting home, I consulted the usual guides plus Howell and Dunn.

Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): brief notes made at time, memory, and looking at photos.

Previous experience with this species: I've seen a fair number in LA, and many in the Northeast U.S./maritime Canada.

Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Positive it is not any other species. As for possibility of hybrid, I do not think it is, but...

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