



Documentation for the PORC:

Person Submitting Data: Cameron Rutt

Address: P.O. Box 223 Blooming Glen, PA 18911

Date: November 27, 2004

Phone: (215)-453-9585

Species: Black-headed Gull

Other Observers: Butch Lishman

How Long Observed: The bird was observed from 2:05 to 2:45 PM.

Where Observed: Directly in front of the Tullytown Landfill in the Franklin Cove which connects with the Delaware River. This is basically Tullytown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The bird was observed from Mill Lane or River Road (depending how you name the road).

Conditions: It was a fairly cold (40 degree range) day with a blustery SE wind. It was mostly sunny with very little cloud coverage. The bird was at closest only 60 feet away but during the course of the observation period strayed as far as 100 feet. This gull was viewed through both my binoculars and my 20-60x scope as well as my companion's Questar which provided some impressive views of this close bird.

Behavior and Habit: The Black-headed Gull initially was spending time with a raft of 191 Laughing Gulls. It usually seemed to remain slightly separated from the main mob at the back fringe of the flock. The bird flew twice-the first time it returned to the same area with the Laughing Gulls but the second time the bird could not be relocated. After the first flight, it seemed to more or less separate from the Laughing Gulls and was intermingling with a number of Ring-billed Gulls who were spread out in a sparse flock. The bird mainly just sat and swam around in the water but occasionally would preen, ruffle, itch, or somehow resituate, especially its wings (which provided the observer's with some underwing glimpses!). There did not seem to be any interactions with the other gulls except in one circumstance when a Ring-billed Gull landed too closely to the Black-headed Gull which 'scared' it.

Species: This Black-headed Gull appeared in adult basic plumage. The most notable feature and the first one that I really noticed was the red bill. It was very distinctive and had a dark tip that extended from the gonydeal angle to the end of the bill. The bill in general appeared longish and thinner compared with the surrounding Laughing Gulls. The face contained a charcoal, circular smudge behind and below the eye. It was fairly clean and only had a slight diffusion of color above the spot to the top of the crown. Around

the eye was another dark spot which was primarily centered at the leading edge of the eye. This spread above and below the eye which had a slight diffusion of color again above the eye. The dark color around the eye was set off by two white eye arcs. The mantle of the bird was a pale gray color which was either the same color or slightly paler than the surrounding adult Ring-billed Gulls. The gray color moved to white upon reaching the tips of the tertials. The primaries of this bird were all black with only one white primary which was the outer primary. I believe Sibley shows two but I could only notice one on this bird. When folded on a sitting bird, this white primary was evident from below. The underparts of the bird were all white. Although I did not get a good look at the color myself, my companion said that the leg color was the same as the bill color (red). The size of the bird was also distinctive. Unlike a small Bonaparte's Gull, this bird blended right in size-wise to the Laughing Gulls. Although it is a slimmer bird, both observers thought that the Black-headed was slightly longer than the surrounding Laughing Gulls. Whether this was true or not, the case remains that both species were very similar in size. The underwing and upperwing patterns were observed in flight and also when it flapped or somehow moved its wings while perched on the water. While the outer primary was white (visible from both above and below), there was a small black line that ran across the tips of the outer primaries (visible from above). The clincher from below was the presence of a substantial amount of black in the primaries of the underwing. I estimated that aside from the outermost white primary the next 3-4 had a significant amount of black to them. There certainly could have been black on more primaries, but this was simply an estimation.

Similar Species: While the only truly similar specie is the Bonaparte's Gull I will also briefly consider the Little Gull here as well. No other gull species are close enough for needed consideration.

Bonaparte's Gull (ad. basic)-considerably smaller size (much smaller than Laughing Gulls), black bill, white underwing, and pink not red legs all help to remove this gull from consideration

Little Gull (ad. basic)-even smaller than Bonaparte's (much smaller than Laughing Gull), all dark underwing (not limited to outer primaries), no black tipped primaries from above, black bill, and black cap negate this species

No other winter gull has a red bill except Heerman's Gull. Other small gulls with similar face patterns such as Kittiwakes and Ross's Gull differ in obvious respects such as bill color, wing pattern in flight, etc.

*Interesting note that Sibley points out is this, "Bonaparte's rarely mixes with larger species, but Black-headed often consorts with Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls." This fits our bird amazingly well as it spent time with both species.

UNUSUAL SIGHTING DOCUMENTATION

Species (common & scientific): Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Number of Individuals: 1 **Sex(es):** ?

Age(s) & Plumage(s): Adult nonbreeding

Date Seen: 12/4/04 **Time:** Approx. 1PM – 3PM

Where Seen (Town/County): Tullytown, Bucks Co.

Exact Location (Park, Road, Lake): End of Mill Lane at Franklin Cove

Observer Reporting:

Name: August Mirabella

Address: 1443 Wheaton Lane
North Wales, PA 19454

E-mail: augustmirabella@aol.com

Telephone (optional): 215-368-0594

Other Observers (Only those who saw & identified the bird with you): Devich Farbotnik. Originally found by Cameron Rutt 11/27/04

Distance to Bird: 100 feet minimum

Viewing Conditions (Sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Sunny with sun at my back or at my right.

Optical Equipment Used: 7X42 Zeiss Bins & Leica 77APO w/20–60X Zoom

Habitat:

Description (only what you observed; size relative to other species present; posture, body shape & proportions; colors & patterns of plumage; bill, eye, & leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): Pale gray-mantled gull about size of Laughing Gull but not as bulky looking. Color was much lighter than the Laughing Gulls and probably lighter than the Ring-billed Gulls. It stood out. Red legs, red bill with black tip, white front, black primaries. I don't remember the white primary as shown by Sibley on a sitting bird. White head with two very pale dark smudges on the head, one originating from the eye, the other from the auricular region, both extending vertically toward the cap. In flight, the extensive black undersides of the primaries blending to darkish secondaries and paler wing linings were clearly seen. The upper wing was pale gray with the outer primaries forming a white triangle with black tips.

Behavior (Be as specific as possible about what the bird was doing): Not much. It sat in the water and on the grass. Saw it fly a couple of times. Pretty gull.

Vocalizations: None

Supporting Evidence if Any (include with report):

Photos were taken by Devich Farbotnik & Bill Etter and I assume were sent to Nick Pulcinella. My video is being submitted with this documentation.

Separation from Similar Species (How you eliminated others): Size eliminates Little Gull and Bonaparte's Gull. Bill and leg color as well as gray areas eliminate Franklin's and Laughing Gull.

Discussion (Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it):

Previous Experience with this and/or Similar Species: Have seen many times.

Are you positive of your ID? (Why or why not): Yes

References:

During Observation: None

After Observation: Sibley's; my video

Date of report: 12/27/04

Signature of Observer: August Mirabella



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Date of Sighting: 11 November 2004 to 4 December 2004

Location: TULLYTOWN

County : BUCKS

Observer(s): Cameron Rutt et al.

Date of Submission: 2004

Submitted by: Cameron Rutt, Devich Farbotnik, August Mirabella, Bill Etter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

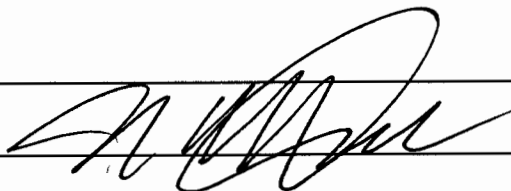
Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
D. Heathcote								
P. Guris	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	X							
DECISION	6							

Comments:

6/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

11/7/05