

344-01-1993

JUDGES CHAMBERS

DOYLESTOWN, PA. 18901

WILLIAM HART RUFÉ, III
JUDGE

March 31, 1994

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Haas
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 18555-9726

Dear Barb and Frank,

Enclosed is our Mew Gull report which, as you can see, has been jointly prepared by Chris Dooley and me. I have previously sent a draft to Chris (and also Diane Allison), and this report reflects the few changes he asked me to make.

I also enclose Chris's original notes that he had prepared to send to you, before we undertook this joint report.

I am submitting the report both for PA Birds and also for Cassinia. If you have any questions, or want the report rewritten in any way, don't hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



William Hart Rufe, III

WHR/mpg

Enclosures

cc: Chris Dooley

Barb and Frank

On Jan. 9, 1994 I observed an Adult
Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) in with a
mixed flock of primarily Ring billed and
Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed were present
but mostly grouped together. Four Lesser-
Black-backed Gulls, one Iceland and one
Glaucous Gull too.

The bird was located in a cove of
the Middle Van Siver Lake known as
Motor Boat Cove. The cove is across
the street from the G. ROWS. INC.
Landfill. This area hosts two very
large landfills within two miles of
each other with the Delaware River
to the East and South and large
lakes to the North and West. They
are located in Falls and Tullytown
Townships in Buck County, Pa. The
Mew Gull was seen in Falls Twp..
This area feeds between 65 and 120
thousand Gulls depending on the time
of year.

I have worked with gulls for 15 yrs. mostly in the mid Atlantic and particularly the flock at this site. I am currently living in Alaska and was home for the holidays. I am thoroughly familiar with Mew, Common, Ring Billed and even Kamchatka Gull. *

I have included my notes for your review. Apparently Hart Rufe on the Southern Bucks ~~was~~ CBC observed what seems to be this bird approx. ten miles away the 19th of December at Core Creek Park.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Chris Dohy

4558 Lawrence Ct
Bensalem Pa 19020
Before Jan 30th
or

P.O. Box 84993
Fairbanks AK 99708

Flight is very different from R-BD
S, + higher in water

Mantle - Darker than near by Ring-billed and most of the Herring Gulls. Almost approaching the LBBG.
Bill - a little

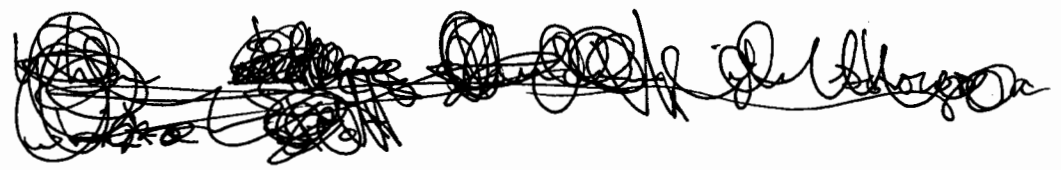
Greenish bill - no ring - dark smudging upper mandible only at forward edge of nostril
- looks more petite.

Eye - Dark - slight hint of red-brown iris.

Head -
Face, forehead, top, neck and chest is heavily smudged brown.

Primaries -
Large white patches in outer primaries
Black not as extensive as in Ring-billed inner primary showing subterminal-like black with white tips.
~~_____~~

Legs - greenish yellow.



P.S. I first observed the Gull on the 28th of Dec. 1993 but was not sure. Then on Jan. 3th I saw a brief but definitive look. Finally on the 4th I first observed the gull flying for approximately 15 minutes then it got lost in the flock. Two hours later I relocated the Mew Gull in the cove and watched it for 40 minutes. It then flew out of the cove and landed in the grass nearby. I watched it for 5 minutes more and all the gull flew up and I did not see it again that day. It was seen a few more times that week and was last seen on the 11th.

MEW GULL IN BUCKS COUNTY

On Saturday, December 18, 1993, Diane Allison and I were counting the numerous Canada Geese, Ring-billed Gulls, Mallards, Black Ducks, and occasional Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, and separating out the domestic and hybrid ducks and geese from the 'real' birds in our assigned Southern Bucks Christmas Count area at Lake Luxembourg in Core Creek County Park, Langhorne, Bucks County, PA. Our specific location was the paved boat launch area on the north side of the lake, and at approximately 7:30 a.m. our purpose was to count all of the geese and ducks on the water before they started dispersing to feed all over southern Bucks County. We also were alert for any unusual birds such as the White-fronted Goose we found there several years ago, as well as the Lesser Black-backed Gulls we knew were possible.

While counting the Ring-billed Gulls we observed a dark mantled gull that at first sight appeared to be a very dark Ring-billed, for it was approximately the same size. We were able to immediately eliminate Laughing Gull and both black-backed gulls on size alone. Upon close study we noted other differences from the Ring-bills: our bird was slightly smaller when seen in direct side-by-side comparison; the bill was slightly thinner, and did not have a ring, but rather appeared to have a tip darker than the base of the bill; the head was smaller and seemed more round; and the bird definitely had a more buoyant appearance with its tail carried higher as it swam in the water.

A Questar telescope look disclosed a dark brown iris, not yellow, a smudge around the eye that did not, however, extend over the top of the head or around the back of the neck, and the most significant mark (at least to us) - a prominent white spot in the middle of the uniform slate gray mantle (which spot we now know is the tertial fringe) which none of the other gulls had. We watched the bird for 35 to 40 minutes, but unfortunately the bird never left the water, so we did not see it fly or have an opportunity to see leg color. We then left to resume our counting duties in other areas of our territory.

Late in the afternoon, approximately 3:30 p.m., we returned to the boat launch area again to see if any other unusual ducks, geese, or gulls had flown in to the lake. The weather, overcast in the morning but bright enough to afford good visibility, had deteriorated to a foggy condition, but we were again able to find the dark-mantled gull without any trouble. Interestingly, there were now a great many more gulls in the area, including four Lesser Black-backed Gulls and more Great Black-backed Gulls than had been there in the morning.

A review of the field guides showed that our bird was not a perfect fit for any of the plumages of Mew Gull depicted. For example, the uniform dark mantle signified 'adult,' but the dark bill tip indicated 'second winter,' and the smudge around the eye, rather than completely over the head and neck, probably indicated an incomplete molt into basic plumage. Nevertheless, the same review conclusively established the bird as a Mew Gull, for no other bird came close. The review included The National Geographic 'Field Guide to the Birds of North America,' (2nd Edition), Peterson's 'A Field Guide to Western Birds,' (3rd

Edition, 1990), Harrison's 'Seabirds, An Identification Guide,' (1985 Edition), and 'Birding,' Vol. XXV: No. 6, December 1993, (pages 386-401).

The following week many birders and I made numerous trips to the site to relocate the bird, at the same time of day as our original observations, as well as other times of the day. generally to find relatively few gulls on the lake. Apparently, the large gull population on Lake Luxembourg on Saturday, December 18, was a result of some kind of temporary displacement at the Waste Management landfill in Falls Township, a conclusion that is borne out by the number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Lake Luxembourg, birds normally found at the landfill or the nearby Penn-Warner lakes. However, on Tuesday, December 28, 1993, Chris Dooley found a Mew Gull on those same Penn-Warner lakes, presumably the same bird. The balance of this report is from Chris Dooley's notes.

I first observed an adult Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) on December 28, 1993, but did not get a definitive look at the bird. I had a second brief observation of the bird on January 3, 1994, and finally obtained a lengthy study of the bird on January 4, 1994. On that occasion the sighting was made at the same location as the earlier observations: in the cove known locally as Motor Boat Cove of the Middle Van Sciver Lake, located directly across the road from G.R.O.W.S., Inc. Landfill. The bird was in a mixed flock of primarily Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, with a few Great Black-backed Gulls as well. Also included in the flock were four Lesser Black-backed Gulls, one Iceland Gull and one Glaucous Gull.

On January 4, 1994, I first found the bird while it was still in flight and was able to see the large white patches, or mirrors, in the outer primaries. The black of the wings was not as extensive as in the Ring-billed Gull, and the inner primaries show a sub-terminal-like thin black band with white tips. Its flight was very different from the flight of the Ring-billed Gulls. I lost the bird while it was still flying, but was able to find it again in the same cove about two hours later. This time I was able to study it for forty minutes, both swimming and in the grass.

In the water it sat higher than the other gulls. Its mantle was darker than the near-by Ring-bills and Herring Gulls, almost approaching the black of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The bill was smaller, more petite than the Ring-billed Gulls, and a greenish yellow without a ring, but with a dark smudge on the upper mandible only, at the forward edge of the nostril. The eye was definitely dark, with a slight hint of a red-brown iris. The face, forehead, cap, neck and chest were heavily smudged brown. The legs were greenish yellow.

I saw the bird a few more times that week, a number of birders signed the bird log at the Penn Warner Club House, and at the following DVOC meeting, several other birders reported seeing the bird as well. My last sighting was on January 11, 1994, and I am not aware of any other sightings after that date.

I have worked with gulls for fifteen years, mostly in the mid-Atlantic, and particularly with the flock at this site. I am currently living in Alaska and am

familiar with Mew, Common, Ring-billed and even Kamchatka Gulls.

The area where the Mew Gull was seen is heavily populated with gulls because there are two large landfills within two miles of each other, the Delaware River is immediately to the East and South, and the large Van Sciver and Penn Warner Lakes are to the North and West. Most of the area is in Falls Township, Bucks County adjacent to Tullytown Borough. Lake Luxembourg in Core Creek Park is located in Newtown Township, Bucks County, approximately ten miles from the Falls Township area. Gull studies in the landfill area have demonstrated gull populations fluctuating between 65,000 and 120,000 gulls depending on the time of the year.

Note: The description of the birds as seen on December 19, 1993, and in January, 1994, apparently differs only in the amount of smudging on the head. We surmise that the completion of molting from summer plumage to winter plumage in the interim might account for that difference.

William Hart Rufe, III
1890 N. 5th Street
Perkasie, PA 18944-2213

Chris Dooley
P.O. Box 84993
Fairbanks, AK 99708



(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

SUPPORTING DETAILS: UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES/HIGH NUMBERS

CBC Name SOUTHERN BUCKS ^{CC.} Date 12/18/93 Compiler ROBERT MERCER
 Observer writing this account & date HART RUFÉ 12/18/93

SPECIES MEW GULL NUMBER, AGE, SEX 1 ADULT
 Distance from bird(s) 100 FEET Relative size of bird JUST SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN ADJACENT RING-BILLS

HEAD & NECK (Describe forehead, crown, auricular, malar region, median line, etc.)
THE ENTIRE HEAD WAS WHITE EXCEPT FOR A SLIGHT SMUDGE AROUND THE EYES

EYE & LORES (Describe supercilium, ring, stripe, color, etc.) EYES DARK, SLIGHT SMUDGE AROUND THE EYES

UPPER & LOWER MANDIBLES BASAL 2/3 OF BILL DARK ORANGE, TIP 1/3 BLACK
 LEGS & FEET IN THE WATER, NOT SEEN

UPPERPARTS (Describe nape, back, rump, upper tail coverts, etc.)
MANTEL SIGNIFICANTLY DARKER THAN THE RING-BILLED GULLS. WHITE SPOT IN MIDDLE OF THE BACK VERY NOTICEABLE UNLIKE RING-BILLS

UNDERPARTS (Describe throat, belly, side, flanks, crissum, etc.)
WHITE UNDERPARTS EXCEPT SOME VERY SLIGHT SMUDGES ON SIDES OF THE CHEST NEAR WING LINE.

RECTRICES (Describe inner, middle, outer tail feathers, color pattern, shape, etc.)
FEATHERS OF TAIL BLACK WITH WHITE SPOTS

WING (Describe color, length, shape, linings, bars, coverts, leading & trailing edges, etc.)
DID NOT SEE THE BIRD FLY - WINGS WERE SOLID DARK GRAY WITH WHITE SEPARATION FROM THE TAIL.

VOCALIZATION NO SOUND

BEHAVIOR THE BIRD REMAINED IN THE WATER AT ALL TIMES, WITH THE RING-BILLED GULLS

Date of observation 12/18/93 Time 7:30-7:40 am. 3:10-3:30p. Weather _____ Sky CLOUDY
 Duration of observation SEE ABOVE Bird - Sun orientation NO SUN
 Exact location LAKE LUXEMBOURG, CORE CREEK PARK AT THE PAVED BOAT RAMP
 Habitat ON THE LAKE Other observers DIANE ALLISON

Optical equipment 6" ELITE 10X42; LEITZ 10X40; QUESTAR TRINOID TELESCOPE

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

THE BIRD APPEARED TO CARRY ITS TAIL AND FOLDED WINGS HIGHER IN THE WATER THAN THE SURROUNDING RING-BILLED GULLS

AN ACCOMPANYING SKETCH OR PHOTOGRAPH CAN BE MOST HELPFUL

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Mew Gull (*Larus canus*)

Date of Sighting: 18 December 1993 to 11 January 1994

Location: CORE CREEK COUNTY PARK & PENN MANOR

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Hart Rufe; Chris Dooley

Diane Allison

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Hart Rufe; Chris Dooley

Written Description: YES Photo: NO Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas		X						
N. Pulcinella		X						
E. Kwater		X						
R. Ickes		X						
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe		X						
J. Skinner		X						
TOTALS		6	1					
DECISION		X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

9-25-94