

Submission Date	2013-01-16 11:30:51
Observer's Name	Chuck Chalfant
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Observer's Address	Street Address: 5626 Umbletown Road City: Gap State / Province: Pa. Postal / Zip Code: 17527 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	None--birding solo
Species (Common Name)	Mew Gull
Species (Scientific Name)	Larus canus
Subspecies (if known)	Short-billed (American), probable.
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult--Non Breeding
Observation Date and Time	12-11-2012 4:00 PM
County	Lancaster
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Colerain Township
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	At intersection of Liberty Land & Academy Road-- Coordinates--H-8--map # 3795--pg.88--ADC-Street Map of Lancaster County Pa.
GPS coordinates of sighting	Not known
Habitat	Circling low over harvested corn & hay fields.
Distance to bird	50 yds at closest distance and 100 yds. at furthest point of their circling, and not much more than 50 yds. high at their highest point when leaving area
Viewing conditions	Great viewing conditions, looking north with birds slowly circling and drifting from east to west, probably circled in close proximity 4 times before disappearing out of sight, great looks. These were exceptional conditions to view these slowly circling Gulls. in late afternoon light on a clear day.
Optical equipment used	Zeiss- 10 X 40--BG

Description

Driving N.W. on Liberty Lane, stopped at the intersection of Liberty & Academy, noticed group of maybe 50-100 Ring-billed Gulls, just lifting off a field directly ahead, I made left turn and pulled off of the road, and instantly noticed a smaller and darker mantled gull (naked eye) from the car. Jumped out of the car (with binoculars already on) and got onto the darker-mantled smaller gull very quickly, I stayed with the bird in good light as it circled low over the field, the size difference was noticeable, and also the darker shade of mantle and top of wings was very evident when compared with RBGU's adjacent to it. Then I noticed a much more noticeable white flash at the end of the primary feathers at the tip of it's wings, again comparing it to the less noticeable flash of white on adjacent RBGU's. While flying side by side with RBGU's I could easily see the rings on the RBGU's bills, but did not notice a dark ring on the smaller gull, Sibley's describes ("a faint dark ring") on an adult MEGU, but if it was there I did not notice any ring on bill. I also did not notice the iris color of this bird. I did notice the smudgy hind neck of this bird as would be in a non-breeding adult, but could not say that it was darker or more smudgy than the adjacent RBGU's. The reason I am calling it a 'non-breeding adult' is because of the more noticeable white flash on the primary tips, this really caught my attention, in a second winter MEGU there is very little if any white spot, according to Sibley. Also the uniform darkness of top of wings out to the black pigment of primaries indicates adult as compared to 2d winter Mew, where the darkness becomes a little more light in the secondaries on the upper wing. Don't remember seeing legs or feet or their color.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

The flock of RBGU's was just lazily circling the field, (that I believe they had just lifted off of), they weren't gaining much altitude, and moving slowly toward the west, when they were in the northeastern quadrant of the circle the viewing was close to perfection.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

1. smaller than RBGU's
2. darker mantled and darker top of wing.
3. much flashier white tips of primaries
4. did not notice ring on bill & could easily see large dark rings on the bills of the RBGU's in very good late afternoon light.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

I spent a month in Alaska in 2006 and admired these beautiful (small round-headed, gulls with the nice facial expression in breeding plumage. I realize how rare it is to see a Mew Gull in Pa., but I am sure that this is what I saw on this date Dec. 11, 2012.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes I am positive, I saw many of the field marks, and cannot conclude anything but Mew Gull. It is the only smaller white-headed gull in N.America than Ring-billed Gull. I am convinced it was a Mew. Wish I had a good photograph of course, but I don't. I did go to Octoraro Lake the next two days, but the Ring-bills were always roosting too far away on water and always in bad light to possibly pick out this Mewgull again.

During

Probably saw this bird in flight for 5 minutes + and probably did not take my eye off of the Mew and it's adjacent RBGU's, I wante to look at it as much as possible before they drifted off to the west, back toward Octoraro Lake, probably.

After

Immediately went to Sibley Guide to Birds which is always in car.

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