







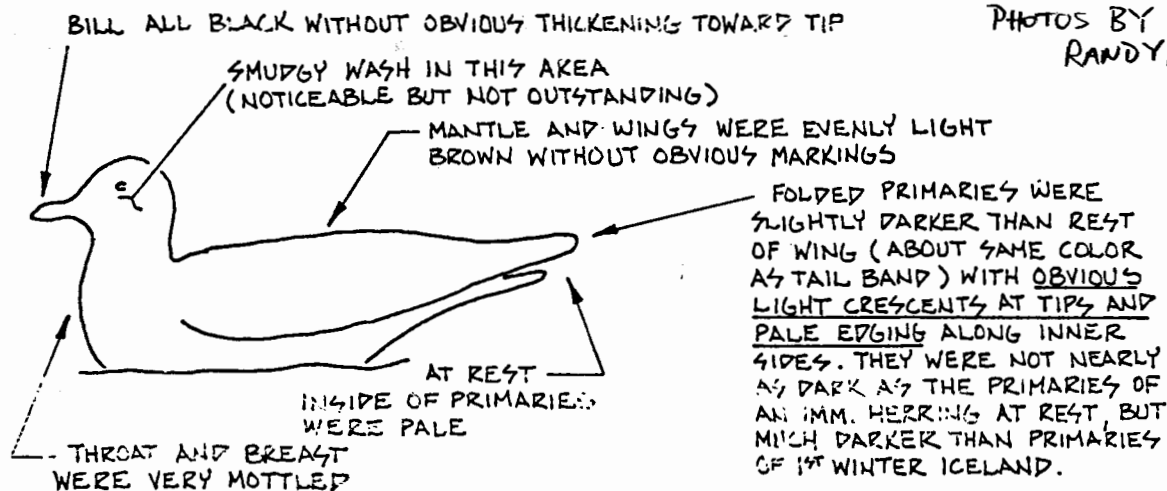


348-01-1989

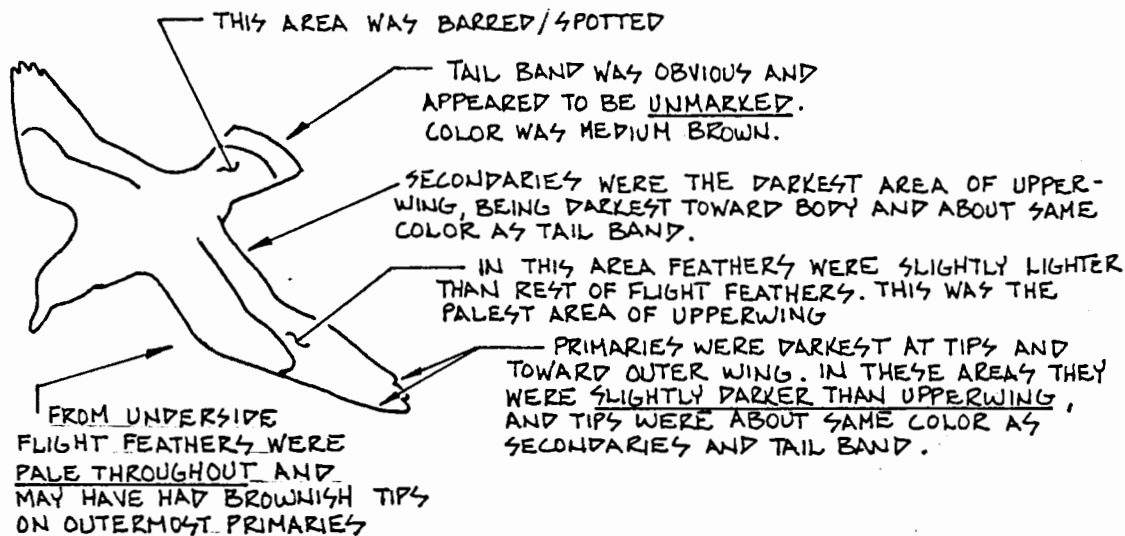
THAYER'S GULL (1ST WINTER) - SAFE HARBOR DAM, LANCASTER CO., PA.

DEC. 31, 1988 - T. GARNER JAN. 7, 1989 - T. GARNER, E. WITMER, R. MILLER JAN. 9, 1989 - J. BOOK

NOTES BY TOM GARNER
PHOTOS BY
RANDY MILLER



WHEN SWIMMING GULL WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO PICK OUT FROM THE IMM. HERRING GULLS WHICH WERE WITH IT, BEING ABOUT THE SAME COLOR. MOST NOTICEABLE FEATURE WAS FOLDED PRIMARIES BEING MUCH LIGHTER (MEDIUM BROWN) IN COMPARISON TO FOLDED PRIMARIES OF IMM. HERRING. (DARK BROWN) 1ST WINTER ICELAND WAS EASY TO PICK OUT WHEN SWIMMING, APPEARING VERY PALE ALL OVER.



IN FLIGHT GULL WAS VERY EASILY PICKED OUT FROM IMM. HERRING GULLS, IT'S UPPERWINGS BEING NOTICEABLY LIGHTER AND VERY EVENLY COLORED (ALTHOUGH IT'S BODY WAS ABOUT SAME COLOR AS IMM. HERRING). IN COMPARISON IT MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLED 1ST WINTER ICELAND IN FLIGHT, IN THE ASPECT OF EVEN COLORATION, BUT ICELAND MUCH PALER WITH LIGHTER FLIGHT FEATHERS AND BODY. 'OUR' GULL WAS BETWEEN IMM. HERRING GULL AND 1ST WINTER ICELAND AS FAR AS HOW DARK IT APPEARED IN FLIGHT.

Eck Schitsky
P.O. Box 10
1801 River Road
Drumore, PA 17581

Dear Eck

Here it is, better late than never I hope. I took these photos and the write-up with me to the annual Maryland Records Committee meeting at the end of March just to see what everyone would say. What they said was - "What a beautiful Thayer's Gull!" Which is exactly what my reaction was the first time I saw it, and spending some time staring at the photos at my leisure has not dimmed my enthusiasm. In fact, I cannot find anything wrong with it at all.

The bird looks like a perfect first winter *Larus thayeri*, if such a race exists. I think there is a very good possibility that the AOU will eventually merge it with *L. glaucooides*. Until then I suppose we will have to deal with it. The only other alternatives are a very dark *L. g. kumlieni* or a very dark *L. argentatus*. I think hybrids are out of the question. *Glaucoides* has not been proven to hybridize, at least not recently. *thayeri* was thought by some to have arisen originally as a hybrid swarm between *argentatus* and *glaucooides*; and any hybrid involving *hyperboreus* should show pale at the base of the bill, a larger bill, and a different wing-tip pattern.

The characters evident on this bird that fit what we think we know about *thayeri* include:

1. Overall uniformity of color. This is typical of *thayeri* and some *kumlieni*, but should eliminate *argentatus*.
2. A slightly darker trailing edge to the secondaries is evident in the flight picture. This eliminates *glaucooides* which does not show this character, even in the darkest birds.
3. An even unmottled tail band. *kumlieni* can show a slight concentration of color resulting in a faint or ghostly tail band, but there is always internal mottling. *Thayeri* typically shows an even tail band without any internal mottling, though never as dark as the tail band on *argentatus*.
4. The primary pattern is right for *thayeri*. Each feather shows a dark inner web and a pale outer web except for a small dark tip.
5. From below the primaries look almost entirely white except for a thin dark line formed by the slightly darker wing tips.
6. The bird has a "punched in the eye" look, the result of a slight concentration of color. Some *argentatus* can show that, if they have very pale heads contrasting with darker body plumage.
7. Sitting on the water the bird shows primaries slightly darker than the overall body color, but the tertials are not darker than the body. If *thayeri* is an identifiable form this should eliminate everything. *Argentatus* should always show dark tertials, and *glaucooides* should never show primaries darker than the overall body color.


You can always get into things like shape and size and jizz and gestalt and all that crap, and there are some slight average differences, but in my experience it is overdone and if you have the plumage it is best avoided. Suffice to say that there is nothing wrong with the bird in question.

I hope all this helps a little, though it seems obvious that the folks who found this recognized it right away. I'll bet they had fun with this.

I guess you heard all about the White-winged Dove up in Cecil County. I did get by for a quick look, moving me within a few of 350 for Maryland. The AOU Check-list Committee voted to split Brown Towhee, Western Flycatcher, and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. If they don't change their minds the splits will be published in August. Lumping Teyer's and Iceland was on the agenda but was narrowly defeated. Maybe next time. At this rate, and with possible splits coming in Solitary Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Marsh Wren, Canada Goose, Willet, Brewer's Sparrow, Red Crossbill, and a few others I'll make 700 without leaving the house.

Don't hesitate to call if you find something good at Conowingo.

Sincerely,


Rick Blom

Record No.: 348-01-1989

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # of

Species: Thayer's Gull

Date of Sighting: 12/31/88, 01/07/89, 01/09/89

Observer(s): Tom Garner, Eric Witmer, Randy Miller, Jerry Book

Date of Submission: 1989

Submitted by: Eric Witmer

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater	X						
B. Haas	X						
F. Haas	X						
R. Leberman	X						
G. McWilliams	X						
S. Santner	X						
P. Schwalbe	X						
TOTALS	7						
DECISION	X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date: 12-26-89