

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
613 Howard Road, West Chester, PA 19380

29 January 2003

Matt Sharp
7135 Bryan St.
Philadelphia, PA 19119

Dear Matt,

Here is a roundup of four Thayer's Gull records from Tullytown that you submitted in 2001 and were not accepted by the committee.

1. An individual on 13 January, which apparently was not observed as being definitely present within Pennsylvania.
2. Another individual on 13 January, which was not accepted on a vote of two in favor and three not in favor (besides your and George's abstentions). The main reason listed by those voting against acceptance were that the bird was not fully described on its own, but merely compared with the other bird documented that day.
3. An individual on 3 March, which went two rounds and was not accepted on a vote of one in favor and five not in favor (besides your abstention). Four of those voting against the record placed it in Class IV-A and one in Class IV-B.
4. An individual on 10 March, which also went two rounds and was not accepted on a vote of two in favor and four against (again with your absention). Three of those voting against placed it in Class IV-A and one in Class IV-B.

You saw the first-round comments on the last two birds, and nothing was added in detail on the second-round comments so I won't summarize them here.

After our e-mail discussion about Thayer's a few days ago, I want to add an item to the meeting agenda to discuss our Thayer's policy. I'm still ambivalent, but I am beginning to doubt the value of evaluating Thayer's based on a written description alone. I just don't know how to make a basic judgment about plumage that lies on a gradation from what both of us would consider "good" Thayer's to the other extreme of a "good" Kumlien's, without seeing for myself what the bird really looked like.

Best regards,



P.S. This is a personal and conversational version of the standard, more formal letter I send out for non-accepted records.

Record Nos. 348-02,03,04,05-2001

348-03-2001

Bird 2

This bird was first seen flying downriver on the NJ side at around 2:00. It landed near Herring Gulls on the PA side of the river just upriver from the green channel marker. It was seen well in flight for a few seconds as it came in for a landing and then sat in the water and was observed for 10-15 minutes as it moved back upriver on the tide. This bird shared most plumage characters with the bird described above. It differed in the ways described below.

Other Observers: George Armistead, Bruce? Evan Obercian

Bill was black with some pale flesh at the base of the lower mandible. Overall the bird was paler than the first individual but showed the same uniform checkering overall. The innermost tertials were more patterned with barring. In flight the tail was pale brown and contrasted with the rest of the upperparts. The outer primaries were the darkest part of the plumage and contrasted with the inner primaries. The secondaries were brown and darker than the wing coverts but not quite as dark as the outer primaries. Otherwise the bird seemed very similar to the first bird.

This was written on Jan. 16 and based on field notes taken at the time of the sighting. References consulted were. NGS Guide 3rd Ed., Sibley Guide, Grant's Guide to Gulls 2nd Ed. Kevin Zimmer's 1991 article in Birding on variation in Kumlien's Iceland Gulls and various websites devoted to Gull identification.

Matt Sharp

348-01-2001

Juvenile Thayer's Gulls
Florence NJ, 13 Jan. 2001

BIRD 1

This bird was first spotted by myself on the PA side of the Delaware River, directly across from the boat ramp in Florence and a little upriver from the green channel marker at that site. It was first seen around midday. It was in view for 15-20 minutes and was seen to move upriver on the tide where it crossed into the NJ side of the river. For the length of the observation the bird was well and evenly lit with the sun above and to the backs of the observers. There was 0% cloud cover. It was sitting on the water for the duration of the observation with Herring Gulls (HEGU) and was in an alert posture for the entire time. Optics used were Leica APO Televid with 32x eyepiece

Other Observers: George Armistead, Bruce? and Evan Obercian

Bare Parts:

Bill was black. Eye was dark.

Head & Upperparts:

The bird was uniformly gray-brown on the upperparts. It was much paler than the dark 1st winter HEGUs present. It was browner, less gray than the pale 1st winter and 2nd winter HEGUs present. In comparison to the few 1st winter/Juv. Iceland Gulls (ICGU) present it was darker and browner, lacking the pale creamy tones on those birds. The head and neck were uniformly brown and not particularly streaked or mottled. The color of the head and neck blended with the underparts. The head was perhaps a little paler.

Underparts:

Brown

Scapulars & Wings:

The wing coverts and scapulars were evenly checkered brown on pale gray-brown and were similar in tone to the rest of the body, contrasting mainly in the degree of patterning. The tertials were solid brown with a pale edge. They were slightly darker than the wing coverts. The primaries were dark brown with pale marks on the very tip. The primaries were darker than the rest of the wing.

Size & Structure:

The bird was smaller and more slightly built than all HEGU present. The neck was more slender than on HEGU and the head was more rounded giving the bird a gentler jizz. It recalled an ICGU in this respect but was on the large size for that species.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri)

Date of Sighting: 13 January 2001 to 13 January 2001

Location: TULLYTOWN

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Matt Sharp, George Armistead, Evan Obercian

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Matt Sharp

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead								X
D. Couchman			X					
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes J. Stanley				X				
B. Reid					X			
B. Leckman P. Rodewald			X					
M. Sharp								X
TOTALS			2	1	2			
DECISION					X			

Comments: 2/3/2

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 12/23/01