

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

29 January 2003

Jerry McWilliams
3508 Allegheny Road
Erie, PA 16508

Dear Jerry,

Thank you for submitting documentation of the Thayer's Gull on 4 March 2001 at Presque Isle Bay. After two rounds, the Committee voted not to accept the record. The vote was 4-3 (as you recall, a minimum 6-1 vote is needed for acceptance).

The three who voted against it placed the record in Class IV-A, "a record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of the observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt." Comments on the ballots indicated that this sense of uncertainty was the general view of those who did not support acceptance.

You'll be interested to know that there are five other Thayer's documentations on the stack of these non-acceptance letters I'm writing -- and all of those were submitted by present PORC members!

The committee seems increasingly dubious about accepting a Thayer's without a photo to evaluate in an attempt to determine where it falls along the Thayer's to Kumlien's line -- or even in some cases to ascertain that it is not a Herring. Coincidentally last week I had a request from a committee member to add a discussion of Thayer's to this year's annual meeting agenda.

I'm personally still ambivalent, but I am beginning to lean toward not evaluating written descriptions of Thayer's. 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.

I would like to hear your opinion about this. On the second round I did vote to accept your record in this case, but I'm almost never comfortable about judging a Thayer's only from a written description when the factors involved are mainly gradations rather than discrete differences.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chair

Record No. 348-06-2001

348-06-2001

THAYER'S GULL

Larus thayeri

Location: channel at the mouth of Presque Isle Bay

Date: March 4, 2001

Time: 11:00 to 11:05 AM

Weather: Viewing conditions good.

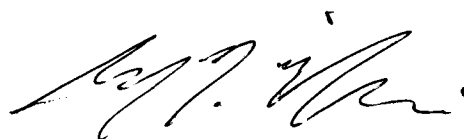
Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: 10 X 40 Zeiss binocular

Viewing distance: about 100 yards

Details of sighting and description: Shortly after looking through the gulls on the ice off the south pier I found little of interest and was driving away when a single basic I plumaged gull flew over. It was about the same size and shape as a Herring Gull. The overall plumage was dirty white with light brown scalloping evenly spaced across the mantle and wing coverts. The head, neck and upper breast were pale and lightly streaked with brown. The bill was entirely black and rather delicate looking (not long and thick). The tertials were medium brown with some white mottling along the outer edges. The outer upper primaries were light brown and the inner primaries were dirty white. The secondaries were the same shade of brown as the outer primaries. The underside of the primaries and secondaries were entirely silvery gray showing no brown even on the outer primaries. The outer two thirds of the tail appeared solid brown the same shade as the outer primaries with a narrow white terminal band. The base of the tail was mottled with white. The shade of brown on the upperside of the outer primaries, secondaries, and tail was somewhat intermediate between a basic I plumaged Iceland Gull and basic I plumaged Herring Gull. Iceland Gulls at this age show mottled tertials and outer upper primaries as dark as mantle and usually not darker than mantle and show pale inner webs rather than solid brown inner webs as in Thayer's Gull. Herring Gulls have darker brown outer primaries, secondaries, and tail than Thayer's Gull and the undersides of the outer primaries are nearly as brown as on the upperside.

I am quite familiar with Thayer's Gull, since I have seen many along the Niagara River in Canada and many in Presque Isle Bay.



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri)

Date of Sighting: 4 March 2001 to 4 March 2001

Location: PRESQUE ISLE BAY

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

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				
J. Stanley			X					
B. Reid			X					
P. Rodewald B. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			5	2				
DECISION								

Comments: 5/2 Go TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 12/23/01

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round Two

Species: Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri)

Date of Sighting: 4 March 2001 to 4 March 2001

Location: PRESQUE ISLE BAY

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

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. Heathcote				X				
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley				X				
B. Reid				X				
B. Lebecum P. Rodewald			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			4	3				
DECISION				X				

Comments: 4/3

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 12/28/02