

348-01-2002

Adult Basic Thayer's Gull  
February 23, 2002. Florence NJ

This bird was seen from the boat ramp at approximately noon. It was first seen sitting in the middle of the Del. River downriver from the green buoy directly across from the small park at the boat ramp. It stayed in relatively close range for only a brief time before taking flight and re-landing on the river much further downriver (@1/4 mile). It was seen in direct comparison with adult and first winter Herring Gulls (HEGU). Though the bird remained in view at close range for only a couple minutes it allowed for good comparisons with surrounding birds and quick but good looks at the upper surface of the spread wing, and the underwing. While in flight it appeared to be in both NJ and PA airspace. The bird was viewed with Leica APO televid with 32x eyepiece

Other observers: ?? I was with several other folks, but I am not sure who saw this bird well. They were Matt Hafner, Dave Hedeem, Glen? And George Armistead

DESCRIPTION – see enclosed sketches

Discussion:

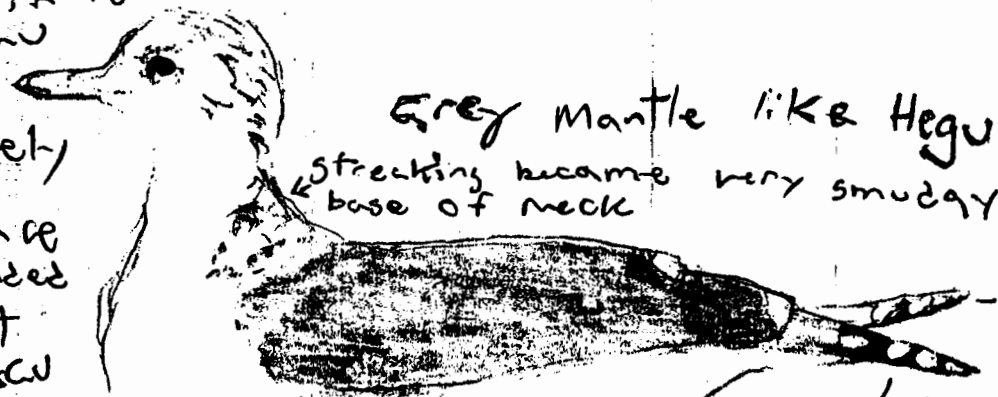
My critical field experience with Adult Thayer's Gull consists solely of birds seen at this location. I have read most of the available ID literature on separating this species and Iceland Gull including the excellent article "Identification and Variation of Winter Adult Thayer's Gulls" by Steve Howell and Martin Elliott in the March 2001 issue of Alula. I have been studying as many adult Iceland Gulls as I can at Florence for the past 4 years and the bird described herein was outside of the range of variation I have seen in the many dozens of adult Iceland Gulls I have seen. The black of the wing tips was solid black – and lacked the slaty tones of the darkest winged Iceland Gulls I have seen. The extent and tone of the head streaking was also out of the range of Iceland Gull, which has, at most, finer brownish streaking on the head and neck. In my admittedly limited experience the head streaking on Iceland Gull does not extend down onto the base of the neck as thickly as on this bird on which it formed a partial collar around the base of the neck. The tone and extent of the head streaking on this bird was different enough from all surrounding birds including Herring Gulls, that it was possible to pick out this individual from almost a half mile away solely by the head streaking. In addition to this character the bird was more robust, longer bodied and bigger headed and longer billed than any Iceland Gull I have seen at Florence. These size comparisons are not meant to be taken as objective measures but rather as overall impressions. The most noticeable structural difference was the bigger head. Even the largest Iceland Gulls I have seen at Florence, birds which approach the size of a very small Herring Gull, have more petite heads accentuated by the shorter and often thinner bill. Also adult Iceland Gulls can be

rather chunky overall appearing short winged and short necked. In contrast this bird appeared more similar to Herring Gull in terms of overall length and shape. The head shape though was not quite as robust as on many Herring gulls which can have a flatter forehead profile and especially a longer thicker bill. The more rounded head and slimmer bill of this bird in combination with the dark eye and smudgy surrounding area gave this bird a different overall head-shape than all but the most petite Herring Gulls. No Herring Gulls seen on this day showed a wing pattern similar to this bird, especially an underwing pattern as pale as on this bird. Nothing about this bird appeared intermediate between Iceland Gull and Thayer's, not in terms of size, structure, head streaking, or wing pattern. The one aspect that troubles me somewhat with this, and other birds I have seen at Florence that matched all the characters of Thayer's Gull has been the lack of a noticeable difference in the shade of the mantle. According to the literature Thayer's should be slightly darker mantled than Herring, but I have never noticed this on this or any other bird I have thought to be a Thayer's. In speaking with other observers I am beginning to suspect that any difference in mantle color of adult Thayer's is very difficult to perceive in the field and may have a limited use as an ID character except for museum specimens.

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2/23 Ad THAV fro. Florence NJ seen sitting Mid-river &  
Head streaking more extensive than in flight

Gr Ad. ICCV seen same day  
brownish in tone  
than HCV  
gave him  
distinctively  
different  
appearance  
also <sup>more</sup> rounded  
than most  
or all HCV  
but larger  
Overall than  
ICCV



Grey Mantle like HCV

← streaking became very smudgy at  
base of neck

underside of far  
primary tip white

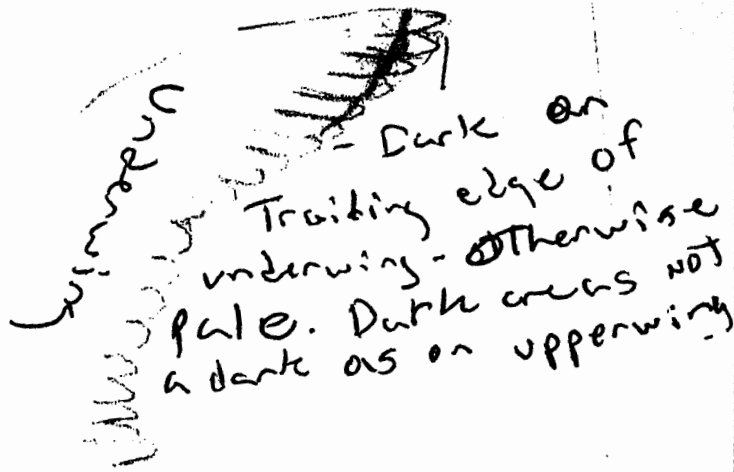
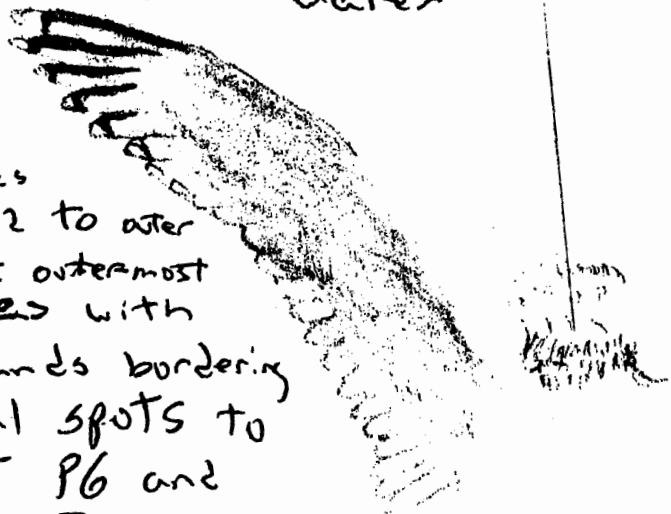
↳ Black on primary like  
HCV but with larger white  
apical spots

Bill was yellow without obvious gonycheal bulge.

eye appeared dark accentuated by dark smudgy area  
surrounding Bird seen on both sides of River (PA/NJ)

clear sky / bright light

2/23 Florence NJ wing pattern as seen from behind as bird  
alighted on water



black on  
primaries  
restricted to outer  
webs of outermost  
primaries with  
black bands bordering  
the apical spots to  
at least P6 and  
maybe P5. This could not

Dark on  
Trailing edge of  
underwing - otherwise  
pale. Dark areas not  
as dark as on upperwing

be seen precisely. Note that the sketch represents the pattern  
seen in the field but not the exact extent of black  
in primaries which under the distance and duration  
of the observation could not be critically  
evaluated

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Tabulation Form - Round One**

Species: Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri)

Date of Sighting: 23 February 2002 to 23 February 2002

Location: DELAWARE RIVER

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Matt Sharp

Date of Submission: 2002

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. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp								X
TOTALS			5	1				1
DECISION			X					

Comments: 5/1/1

Signature (Secretary) 

Date: 2/25/02