



348-01-2004

**Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)**

**Age:** First-cycle

**Date:** December 22, 2004

**Location:** Misery Bay, Presque Isle State Park, Erie County

**Site:** Bay ice beyond Perry Monument

**Observer:** Ben Coulter  
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**Other observers:** Jerry McWilliams

**Distance to bird:** About 150 meters.

**Conditions:** Cloudy and overcast. Snowing moderately. Some wind. Visibility fairly good.

**Optics:** Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars, Leica Televid 77mm APO scope w/ 20-60x eyepiece, Nikon Coolpix 995

**Description:**

Largish first cycle gull, size of small Herring Gull. About 25% larger than adjacent Ring-billed Gulls. Overall coloration medium chocolate brown, including upperparts and underparts. Rounded head medium brown, slightly darker mask around eye, and with faint paler blaze at base of bill. Mantle and scapulars brownish with pale notching and edging giving mottled effect, with no replaced feathers noted. Wing coverts marbled with pale. Tertials brown-centered (not strongly barred) with paler notching and edges, similar to body color and contrasting with darker primaries (unlike Herring Gull). Primaries dark chocolate brown (not black), with pale crescents on tips on folded wing. On spread wing, darker brown outer webs of outer primaries contrasted with paler inner webs, creating distinctive two-toned venetian blind effect. Secondaries with darker brown webs, giving appearance of a dark bar on the trailing edge of the wing. Tail darker brown, similar in tone to secondaries. Uppertail coverts a bit paler than tail, with brown markings. Undertail coverts whitish with brown markings. Bill black with no suggestion of pale at base; rather small and delicate, with less prominent gonydeal angle. Legs dull pink. Iris dark.

**Supporting Evidence:** see photographs and video by Ben Coulter

DSCN4532.MOV: Preening THGU. A bit underexposed, but shows tertial pattern and tail/upptail covs well.

DSCN4533.MOV: Preening THGU. When bird is preening primaries, a primary becomes shuffled out of order, and the dark outer web and pale inner web can be seen.

DSCN4536.JPG: THGU preening with RBGUs and Mallards. Checkered upperpart pattern, folded primaries, and tertials visible. Underexposed.

DSCN4538.JPG: Shows THGU standing w/ RBGUs and Mallards.

**Similar species:** First-cycle American Herring has darker, blackish to black primaries and dark brown tertials which strongly contrast with body coloration. Appears less uniform than Thayer's. Dark outer primaries contrast with paler inners to create more prominent "window" effect on spread wing. Typically larger-billed, with stronger gonydeal angle, and more angular head than Thayer's. Bill often shows pale on base by

this date. Often shows more extensive molt on head and body, often with replaced scapulars and mantle feathers.

First-cycle Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull similar to Thayer's, but averages smaller, with more rounded head and smaller bill, and usually paler. Many body feathers with numerous thin internal markings, more intricately patterned than Thayer's. Primaries paler than Thayer's. Darker webs of outer primaries (if present) less extensive and less contrasting. Normally does not show strongly darker secondary bar or tail of Thayer's.

Apparent intergrades between Kumlien's and Thayer's can be very problematic for identification, but we did not observe any features indicating possible Kumlien's ancestry on this gull.

Other first-cycle large gulls and hybrids eliminated by body structure, bill shape, and plumage. Glaucous-winged x Herring hybrids in particular may appear similar by plumage, but are bulkier and more heavily built than Thayer's, with shorter, broader wing, and with a stronger bill. Such a bird would likely be far rarer in the Great Lakes region than Thayer's Gull.

**Discussion:** I found this bird preening on ice with a group of Ring-billed Gulls and Mallards. It was observed for at least 20 minutes actively preening and stretching, allowing care study of the wing pattern.

**Prior experience:** I've seen this species numerous times in Erie, and on the Niagara River. I also have extensive experience with American Herring and Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull.

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Thayer's Gull    *Larus thayeri*

Date of Sighting: 26 December 2004 to 26 December 2004

County : ERIE

Location : PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Observer(s): Ben Coulter

Date of Submission: 2010

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson								
<del>B. Coulter</del> D. DeRamus	X							
<del>G. Rutt</del> B. Coulter	<del>X</del>							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	6							
DECISION	X							

Comments: c/o

Signature (Secretary)

Nick Pulcinella

Date: 10/1/2010