



348-OL-2004

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

**Age:** First-cycle

**Date:** December 26, 2004, afternoon.

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

**Site:** Ice offshore of East Pier, Presque Isle State Park

**Observer:** Ben Coulter  
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Pittsburgh, PA 15223  
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**Other observers:** none

**Distance to bird:** About 100 meters

**Conditions:** Cloudy and overcast. Snowing lightly.

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

**Description:** Large first-cycle gull, similar in size to accompanying American Herring Gulls. Medium chocolate brown, with slightly darker brown primaries. Head fairly rounded, medium brown with paler blaze at bill base and hint of darker mask around eyes and across top of head. Scapulars and mantle brown with pale notches and edges to feathers, making it look checkered or mottled. Upperwing coverts with pale edges and markings. Tertials medium-dark chocolate brown with solid centers and with pale on edges and tips, not strongly contrasting with body coloration. Folded primaries dark brown, contrastingly darker than rest of body. Outer webs of spread outer primaries substantially darker than inner webs, causing dark and light striped effect on upper wingtips and a pale silvery underwing (see especially video DSCN4575.MOV). Secondaries also darker brown on outer webs than inners, creating dark bar on trailing edge of wing from above. Tail essentially all dark chocolate brown. Uppertail coverts somewhat paler brown than tail, with scattered dark markings. Irides dark. Bill all black, rather compact and delicate, and with weaker gonydeal angle than most Herring Gulls. Legs pinkish.

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

DSCN4575.MOV: Shows Thayer's Gull bathing and in short flight out of water.

Primary and tail pattern readily visible if video is paused.

DSCN4592.MOV: Shows Thayer's Gull preening and sitting on ice. Primaries darker than tertials/body.

DSCN4593.JPG: Rather blurry shot of Thayer's Gull resting on ice, showing primaries darker than tertials/body.

DSCN4598.JPG: Blurry shot of preening Thayer's Gull showing tertial pattern.

**Similar species:** First-cycle American Herring has darker, blackish to black primaries and dark brown tertials which strongly contrast with paler 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 paler and normally does not show darker secondary bar or strongly darker tail of Thayer's.

Apparent intergrades between Kumlien's and Thayer's can be very problematic for identification, but I did not observe any features indicating 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.

**Discussion:** I found this Thayer's Gull with a group of large gulls at a patch of open water offshore. It was observed for some time bathing and preening, and was seen in flight, with a second-cycle Kumlien's Gull present at the same location. It was photographed, but documentation has not been submitted to PORC until now.

**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>E. Rutt</del> B. Coulter	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	6							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/0

Signature (Secretary)    Nick Pulcinella

Date: 10/1/2010