

WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Please Type or Print Legibly

Species:	Iceland Gull (<i>Larus glaucooides</i>)	Number: (leave blank)	2015-6		
Location:	Pike Island Lock and Dam	Date:	2/5/15	Time:	12:00
Bird Seen:	12:00	To:	13:30	Age/Sex:	1st winter/Sex unknown

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached. Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

Medium to Large white-headed gull. Intermediate in size between Ring-billed and Herring both of which were numerous and in direct approximation. Head was round. Bill was short and black. Eye was black. Body was rounded. Legs were short and pink. Feet were pink. The bird had a somewhat stocky appearance when roosting on the floes. Wings were broad based tapering to a point while in flight. At rest, the primary tips extended beyond the tail.

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

The bird was a 1st winter Kumlien's subspecies Iceland Gull which is the expected subspecies. Head was pale gray-brown. Nape was of a similar color. Back was lighter pale gray-brown due to increased influence of white in the mottling. Throat and underparts were also pale gray-brown more densely mottled than the back. Undertail coverts were barred with pale gray-brown. Wings were of similarly patterned pale gray-brown as the back. Primary tips were pale gray-brown, paler than the body.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

No vocalizations heard.

Description of behavior:

Bird was seen roosting on ice floes in direct approximation with Great Black-backed, Glaucous, Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Ring-billed Gulls. Bird was also seen in flight and actively hunting/fishing. No behavioral characteristics stood out as distinctive.

Habitat: (General and Specific)

General: Large river with lock and dam system creating back up of small ice floes up river and open water down river.

Specific: Pike Island Lock and Dam on the Ohio River north of Wheeling, WV

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

Bird was observed from a distance of 10-500yards during the course of observation. Kowa TSN 883 Prominar scope with 20-60x zoom eye piece and Swarovski Swarovision 10x42 EL binoculars used in addition to photographic equipment. Weather was overcast and view was unobstructed. Viewed from recreational area along the Ohio side of the Pike Island Lock and Dam complex. Bird was evenly lit and views were good and in direct approximation to similar species for direct comparison of size, shape, and color.

Previous experience with this species:

Seen several times previously in other states along the coast, always in winter. Also seen several times later in the same year with other experienced birders. Multiple individuals of this species were seen at this same location covering 1st, 2nd, and ASY plumage cycles.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

Have experience with Thayer's Gull seen a handful of times along the Atlantic and Pacific coast. Have seen Thayer's Gull in all plumage cycles. Have also seen individuals which were indistinguishable in field conditions between Iceland/Thayer's. This individual meets criteria based on current species descriptions/divisions for separation. More experience with other possible confounding gulls all of which were seen in direct approximation to the subject bird on the day of viewing.

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

This species was seen by numerous well-respected birders this winter with multiple individuals seen. On the day of this observation I was alone. I did return however later in the season with other excellent birders (LeJay Graffious, Matt Orsie, etc.) and we were also able to observe all reported Gull species including Iceland though on that occasion the individual was a full Adult bird.

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and especially how did these influence this description:

The Sibley Guide to Birds, Gulls of the Americas by Howell & Dunn, and various internet sources were referenced for confirmation. Photographs and field impressions matched with the best knowledge available for identification of the Kumlien's subspecies of Iceland Gull and salient points for eliminating Thayer's and Glaucous were all seen and confirmed with these references.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

2 and half months for writing this report. Field notes were entered into ebird on the day of observation though.

Name:

Derek D. Courtney, MD

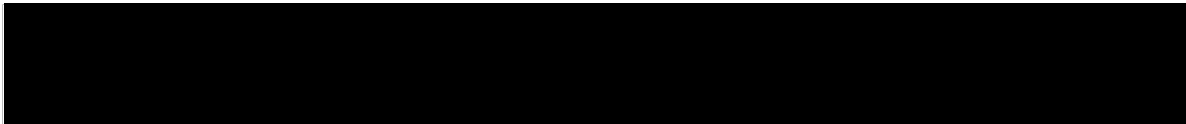
Address:



Date:

4/20/15

Signature:



Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee
Attn: Wendell Argabrite
111 Jefferson Park Dr.
Huntington, WV 25705
Or E-mail to: wargabrite@aol.com

Please use the space below to add any appropriate details you feel were missing from the above form or to expand on any answers whose allotted space was insufficient for a complete response:

Photos will be attached along with this submission for review by BRC members to support.

For the sake of the thoroughness, a brief discussion on elimination of other common gull species.

- This individual was larger than surrounding Ring-billed Gulls with a different body structure particularly in the head/bill where the rounded head/small all black bill gave a completely different expression to this bird. The Iceland Gull lacked any purely gray tones and its gray-brown mottling was too pale for a normal Ring-billed of the same age. Wing tips were paler than the body as well.

Structure of the head/bill eliminated a washed out individual.

- This individual was smaller than surrounding Herring Gulls again with a totally different head/body structure. The bill was slight in comparison to Herring Gulls. Head was too rounded and bill was too slight and shaped differently to be a washed out Herring Gull. Mottling was too pale and wing tips too light for normal Herring Gull.

- This individual was far too small/light/ and small-billed for Great Black-backed of any age. Structure and plumage were completely off.

- This individual was of similar size to Lesser Black-backed Gulls but had paler mottling overall. No streaking was noted on the breast. Legs were deeper pink than would be expected. Overall coloration was far too pale and wing tips were too light for a normal Lesser Black-backed. Pattern on the back and underparts were off as well for a washed out Lesser-backed Gull. Wings were not as long/sleek as would be expected for Lesser Black-backed as well.

- This individual was smaller than Glaucous Gull present with a slighter bill. Bill was also all black whereas a Glaucous would show pink. Head was too rounded for Glaucous and the bird was darker overall than would be expected for a Glaucous of similar age. Wing tips were also darker than would be expected for normal Glaucous. Structure eliminated a melanistic Glaucous.

- Thayer's Gull is the major confounder for this species. Differentiation between the two is somewhat fluid with arguments that no species division actually exists. Currently the AOU/ABA recognizes them as different species. Based on the current knowledge. Iceland Gulls give a gentler expression with rounder head and smaller bill. Thayer's Gulls often give off a more Herring Gull-like feel than Iceland due to their larger size/bill and flatter head. Most differentiations are made on plumage characteristics in the field though. This bird has more patterned gray-brown underparts than Thayer's which should be smoother. The back pattern was more boldly marked and undertail coverts more boldly barred than Thayer's. Primarily the difference for division is noted in the wings. This bird's primary tips were lighter than that of the body. And its tertials lacked the boldly gray-brown centers of Thayer's Gull.

It should be noted again that species differentiation between Thayer's and Iceland is an ongoing field of scientific study. This bird was not a nominate *Glaucoides* subspecies making identification more difficult. Nevertheless, based on plumage and structure, this bird fits squarely in what authorities define as Kumlien's type Iceland Gull. Thus, this bird should be recognized as such.

It should also be noted that the appearance of this bird coincides with an influx of uncommon winter gulls due to the freezing of the Great Lakes. Glaucous, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were all present as well with multiple individuals of each recorded. Thayer's Gull is a far more rare visitor to the Eastern US with numbers of Iceland Gulls vastly outweighing Thayer's even at Gull watching hotspots like Niagara Falls. Thayer's Gull has yet to be documented in WV.

It should also be noted that I was not the first person to report or document this species at this location this winter. List-serv should be checked and the original finder and documenter(s) given credit for their efforts.



2015-7 pic