



Geoffrey Williamson <[REDACTED]>

Re: Greg Neise's possible Slaty-backed Gull

1 message

Joseph Morlan <[REDACTED]>

Thu, May 25, 2017 at 11:36 AM

Reply-To: [REDACTED]

To: Geoffrey Williamson <[REDACTED]>

Geoff,

Oh gosh; I was afraid of this.

There were a couple of additional off-hand comments on the Facebook thread that I deleted. One where I said "Definitely NOT!!!" to the request to quote me and another where I said "It is definitely not a Western Gull." In retrospect I should have left those comments up.

Anyway, separation from Western Gull is easier than I thought. However as Al Jaramillo pointed out, the tricky birds have always been the hybrids Herring x Glaucous-winged, and Western x Glaucous-winged.

Those issues still apply to any claimed Slaty-backed in North America. Greg's bird does indeed look good for Slaty-backed in my view, but the soft focus, worn plumage and extensive variation in both Slaty-backed and various hybrid combinations (including Slaty-backed X Glaucous-winged) conspire to make its identification less than iron clad. Under the circumstances I believe the Illinois decision was correct. That is not to say the bird was not a Slaty-backed; just that the evidence is not conclusive based on current knowledge.

Feel free to add these comments to the file and/or share them with Greg if desired.

On Thu, 25 May 2017 09:39:19 -0500, Geoffrey Williamson

<[REDACTED]> wrote:

>Dear Joe:

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>Greg Neise sent me the link to your Slaty-backed / Western comparison photos, with comments on the bird that Greg photographed here in Illinois:

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>https://www.facebook.com/joseph.morlan.12/posts/10209006287542132?comment_id=10209006386624609&comment_tracking=%7B%22t%22%3A%22R%22%7D

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>Though Greg said the record was in limbo, actually it was rejected by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC). The committee report containing information regarding the record s is here:

><http://www.illinoisbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IORC-report-18.pdf>

>. The report notes, "One SY bird photographed and well-documented at North Point Marina, 2 Jun 2011 (2011.031). While the documentation on this bird was excellent, the Committee felt that the very worn state of the plumage and the current state of knowledge regarding identifying this species at such an age made it impossible to rule out other possible species."

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>I would welcome your comments about the bird and its identification to add to the file and possibly to reopen the case, if you are inclined to submit any.

>

>Sincerely,

5/27/2017

Gmail - Re: Greg Neise's possible Slaty-backed Gull

>Geoff Williamson

>IORC Secretary

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Joseph Morlan, Pacifica, CA