



IOS IORC <iorcommittee@gmail.com>

Re: IORC Documentation Submission

1 message

Amar Ayyash <[REDACTED]>

Sat, Jul 16, 2016 at 8:52 AM

To: IORC <iorcommittee@gmail.com>

Hi, Geoff. Thanks for the reply.

I've numbered my comments to each of your points above:

1) To my knowledge, neither committee in Indiana or Michigan has evaluated this bird.

2) The only publication that I know of that provides arguments for this hybrid form is the same article you mention in Indiana Quarterly (I'll attach it here and you can look over the authors' discussion if you'd like). The point that the authors make is that this individual resembles a Chandeleur Gull more than any other "known" hybrid form. I should mention before addressing the rest of your concerns that there is no genetic profile available for this individual. "Presumed identity already established" refers strictly to what we've labeled this bird in the field based mostly on comparisons from the Dittmann and Cardiff article in *Birding* (37:266-276). In overcast conditions and underexposed photos, some have even questioned why this bird isn't a Kelp Gull! One other point that might be of help is that there is an accepted Kelp Gull on the Indiana lakefront. The Indiana authors mention the southern Lake Michigan lakefront as potentially being an accessible site for any possible post-Katrina birds that got displaced (in that it's a straight shot north along the Mississippi River Valley from the Chandeleur Islands).

3) Beside the Indiana Quarterly article (attached), two birders from Michigan (Tim Barewald and Matt Hysell) have also supported the Kelp x Herring identification based on their observations in Berrien County, MI. These two have named this bird "Gull Nasty". A blog post by Matt: <http://goo.gl/8j81Bc>

4) I was the only observer in Will County for the sighting being submitted here. The people I mention have observed this individual numerous times in Michigan City (the bird's primary winter site). Brock and company noticed the gull went missing in early January. I emailed photos to the Brock, Cassady, Kendall and McCoy after my sighting and they all agreed it was the putative Kelp x Herring from the Indiana lakefront. This should clarify any possible suspicions that there could be different birds involved. It's not unusual, I've learned, for our wintering gulls to cover 100+ miles in the course of one week. This does not, however, make it any more likely or less likely that the bird is or is not a Kelp x Herring hybrid.

5) I apologize for not describing the primary pattern, a key factor that can help dismiss Great Black-backed Gull as being one of the parents. There are two notable characteristics to the primary pattern that support Kelp parentage: a small p10 mirror that apparently hasn't grown in size in the last 8 years, coupled with an unmarked p9. Also, the black on inner vanes of p7-p9 is rather extensive. Oddly, every primary on this bird has some amount of black subterminal marking on the primaries. Another reason to dismiss Great Black-backed x Herring is the amount of head streaking in the winter months. The presumed Great Lakes Gull hybrids that I know of have mostly white heads in winter, similar to that of Great Black-backed Gull. Here's a photo of mine showing this individual in October 2015 in Berrien County, Michigan: <https://goo.gl/knb0xG>

Compare the head streaking 4 months later when I observed it in Will County (February 2016): <https://goo.gl/mH5Ynv>

I should also mention that although this bird given the impression of being a larger gull - larger than Herring - I feel this is only due to the slightly longer legs (which could be attributed to Kelp).

6) I'm not sure why the photos appear to be low resolution? Are you opening these files on a smart phone? This happens to me on my iPhone and iPad since I don't have the Picasa Web App, but it's not a problem on my PC. Here's a URL from my webpage, along with another album showing the wingtip pattern from Spring 2015.

Will County sighting (I hope these images are better):

<http://goo.gl/eyhHtj>

Open wing photos:

<http://goo.gl/3frD8E>

Thanks,
Amar

On Sun, Jul 10, 2016 at 10:58 PM, IORC <iorcommittee@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Amar:

Thank you very much for documenting your Herring Gull x Kelp Gull observation and submitting the documentation to the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC). IORC will review this record, and upon completing the review will communicate to you the results of its evaluation. If for whatever reason the completion of the review is delayed, IORC will endeavor to notify you periodically of that fact. For your information, the file number associated with this record is 2016-049.

I do have a few issues to clarify with respect to this observation, and I hope that you will be able to help with some of all of these.

1. First of all, I perused the web sites for the Indiana and Michigan bird records committees (BRCs), and I find no evidence that either committee has evaluated this individual. I have written to Kirk Roth (chair of the Indiana BRC) to inquire directly with him about this point. Do you yourself know if either BRC has received and acted on documentation of this individual?
2. Secondly, you indicate that "Prseumed identity already established." Would you point me to any published record of which you are aware that provides arguments to establish the identity of this individual as this hybrid form, or provides a conclusion that this is the case? I am aware of the following reference: Brock, K.J. and J.K. Cassady. 2011. "Possible Chandeleur Gulls on the Indiana Lakefront." Indiana Audubon Quarterly, 89:69-75. Though I have not recently given this article a close read, my understanding is that, as per the title, the conclusion regarding which specific hybrid combination for various Indiana birds remains at least somewhat speculative. Perhaps there is a more recent reference clarifying this situation or dealing with new birds. I suppose, too, that there may be relevant information that you may have published on your web site/blog, and if so it could be helpful to IORC's evaluation to be aware of those.
3. In the event that you have knowledge of published records along the lines of points 1 and 2 above, I encourage you to supplement your documentation with evidence/arguments as to why you believe this individual is the same as one that has been considered in prior publications/documentations. This would enable connecting this documentation of the bird in Illinois to prior documented occurrences of the individual.
4. You indicate that others agreeing with the identification were Ken Brock, Jeff McCoy, John Cassady, and John Kendall. Please clarify whether or not these individuals were present during the time of your observation, whether they themselves observed the bird at another time, or whether their opinions are based on information (such as your photographs) other than their direct observation of the bird.
5. Finally, in the absence of strong connections of this individual to others that have undergone a detailed analysis, I encourage you to supplement your documentation with any available further details from your observation regarding the appearance of the bird, which in the present documentation is fairly brief. For instance, there is little detail provided about the patterns on the primaries.
6. I have accessed the photographs from the web site that your documentation referenced. However, these are fairly low resolution images. Please consider submitting to be part of the documentation any higher resolution copies of these images that you may be able to provide.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the points I have raised above.

As you may be aware, IORC's review is in large part to make a judgment as to whether the body of submitted evidence (yours and that from others, if any) is sufficient to assure the complete identification to species of the observed bird.

Regardless of the outcome of IORC's judgment, the information you provided will be part of the permanent record that IORC maintains of occurrence of birdlife in Illinois. This will provide verifiable evidence to interested individuals in the future regarding the observation. Your having taken the time to prepare and submit your documentation is much appreciated by the current members of IORC, and will also be appreciated by students of Illinois bird life in the future.

Please note that because IORC's purpose is in part to maintain permanently the original bird records for use by future bird students, IORC provides access to the material associated with records to interested individuals. In fulfilling this purpose, IORC may publish photographs (and other material) submitted regarding records as part of IORC's regular reports and IOS's seasonal reports, which appear in the Illinois Ornithological Society's (IOS's) journal *Meadowlark*, and may also publish material (including photographs) on its web site. No other publication of submitted photographs is intended by IORC. IORC and IOS do not pay any reproduction fees for this use of images.

Sincerely,

Geoff Williamson

IORC Secretary

On Sat, Jul 2, 2016 at 1:06 PM, IORC Web Submission <iorcommittee@gmail.com> wrote:

1) This form submitted as supporting documentation of (check all that apply):	Hybrid
If other, please describe:	Putative Hybrid
2) Species:	Herring x Kelp
3) Number of birds:	1
4) Age/Sex/Plumage:	Adult Type
5) Date:	2016-02-15
6) Location (include county):	Arsenal Road Pond. Willmington, Illinois. Will County.
7) Observers:	Amar Ayyash
8) Your name:	Amar Ayyash
Street Address	[REDACTED]
Street Address Line 2	
City	[REDACTED]
State / Province / Region	[REDACTED]
Postal / Zip Code	[REDACTED]
Country	[REDACTED]
10) Your e-mail address:	[REDACTED]
11) Others agreeing with the identification:	Kenneth Brock, Jeff McCoy, John Cassady, John Kendall
12) Observers NOT agreeing with the identification:	N/A
13) Description of bird (size, shape, proportions, details of both color and pattern on head, back, chin, throat, breast,	Herring size but with slightly longer legs and a more bulbous-tipped bill. Upperparts close to Great Black-backed, but with a grayish matte appearance. Leg color unmatched by any species - a dull, grayish yellow. Broader trailing edge than typical Herring and every

flanks, wings, undertail, and tail, etc.; coloration of soft parts: bill, legs, and feet) include only details actually seen in the field :	primary marked with some subterminal black (not seen in the provided images).
14) Description of behavior:	Resting at a known loafing spot near the Willmington landfill.
15) Description of vocalizations:	N/A
16) Description of immediate and surrounding habitat(s):	Open rural area with semi-industrial surrounding. Landfill nearby which is what was holding this bird, and hundreds of more gulls.
17) Optical equipment used for observation (type, power):	Eagle Optic Rangers 10 x 42.
18) Distance/how measured?	50-75 yards (rough estimate)
19) Time of observation:	10:00 am
20) Total time of observation:	15-20 minutes
21) Weather conditions:	Overcast, in between snow bouts. Temperature under 20F.
22) Previous experience with this species and similar species:	This is a known individual that has frequented the southeast rim of Lake Michigan, alternating between Berrien County, Michigan and Michigan City, Indiana. I've observed this same bird multiple times away from this site. The bird was reported at the Arsenal Road Pond a couple of days before my sighting, and there was some confusion as to whether it was a GBBG x HERG or "the" SBGU. A confusing photo was posted on Facebook and I immediately suspected it was the presumed Kelp x Herring Gull from Lake Michigan (so-called Chandeaur Gull).
23) Please eliminate other similar species and/or hybrids:	Great Black-backed x Herring ruled out by leg color and persistent small white mirror on p10 (this wingtip pattern hasn't changed much in the last 4-5 years). Great Black-backed x Lesser Black-backed isn't a known hybrid form. Although that combination is plausible, this individual looks much more like the hybrids documented on the Chandeaur Islands by Donna Dittmann and Steven Cardiff (see Birding; May/June 2005).
24) Were photos obtained?	Yes
25) If so, by whom?	Amar Ayyash
26) Books and illustrations consulted and advice received. How did these influence this description?:	Presumed identity already established. Literature used "Origins and Identification of Kelp x Herring Gull Hybrids. The Chandeaur Gull." in Birding.
27) How long after the observation were field notes recorded?	No field notes taken.
28) How long after the observation was this form completed?	Almost 5 months.
29) Additional remarks (URLs can be entered here):	Photo album can be found here: https://goo.gl/IKVqg

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Illinois Ornithological Records Committee

e-mail: iorcommittee@gmail.com



Possible Chandeleur Gulls on the Indiana Lakefront.pdf

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