

1997.003

## ILLINOIS DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTINGS

Species: Glaucous-winged Gull - firs + winter Number Seen: 1  
 Location (including county): Alton, IL Along Miss. River off Hwy 143 <sup>at Alton Barge Term. access</sup>  
 Date(s): 2/11/97 Time of day: 1:15 PM to 1:16 PM

Habitat Summary: Ice floes + open water of Miss. River

Observers -- Your name and address: Phoebe Snetsinger, [REDACTED]

Others present: none

Others before or after you: Jack van Benthuysen, Bill Rowe, Dan Kasselbaum <sup>Jim Ziebol</sup> + numerous others.

Describe in great detail (but only include what actually was seen in the field) the size, shape and color-pattern of the bird(s), including the plumage, beak and feet coloration and other diagnostic characteristics. Also describe the voice and behavior:

This was a brief observation of a bird studied by several observers over previous days at same location. I'd been looking for it all morning by sorting thru imm. Herring + <sup>a few</sup> Thayers. When I finally spotted it w. <sup>(approx same size)</sup> Herrings near shore I could tell with binocs. that it was the bird in question. I got the scope on it just long enough to see the medium gray-brown <sup>finely</sup> mottled head + body + longish, heavy all-black bill contrasting with the whitish feathering around the base - quite like photo p. 71 in Aud. Master Guide. No chance to examine it in more detail, since it immediately took flight, flying up + away down river in good light (cloudy - no sun). I had a lengthy, <sup>(30 sec)</sup> good binoc. view in flight starting at close range - about 50 ft. Upperparts in flight looked totally uniform <sup>medium</sup> gray-brown without any darker primaries, secondary bar, rump-tail contrast or tail band.

Similar species (explain how eliminated):

Herring - show darker primaries, sec. bar + dark tail in this plumage. Thayer's - dark tail band. Iceland - more petite bill + build, paler plumage + whiter prim.

Glaucous - paler plumage + prim. + 2-toned bill.

This bird was entirely consistent with Glaucous-winged Gull in my experience, + although my view was brief, it was sufficient to rule out 'normal' representatives of contending species. If I'd had this view on the west coast of the US or in Japan where I've also seen the species, I would not have hesitated to call it a first-winter Glaucous-winged. In St. Louis, however, establishing its identity with certainty is trickier, and I'm sending my observation along merely as "corroborative evidence" to others' reports. A first area-record could not be claimed on this brief sighting alone.

Phoebe Snetsinger 2/12/97

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PHOEBE B. SNETSINGER