

ILLINOIS

DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS  
SUBMITTED TO ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE (I.O.R.C.)

I.O.R.C. RECORD NUMBER

1998.079

This form submitted as supporting documentation of (check all that apply):

- Unusual species;  Unusual date;  Unusual number;
- Unusual plumage;  Unusual breeding record;  Christmas Count record;  Spring Count record;
- Breeding Census record;  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Species: California Gull

2. Number of birds: 1 Age/sex/plumage: First winter

3. Date(s): 98-12-12

4. Location (incl. County): Mallard Lake Landfill Site (Discovery Park) Dupage County

5. Observers:  
Your name: Jonathan Simms Phone: [REDACTED]

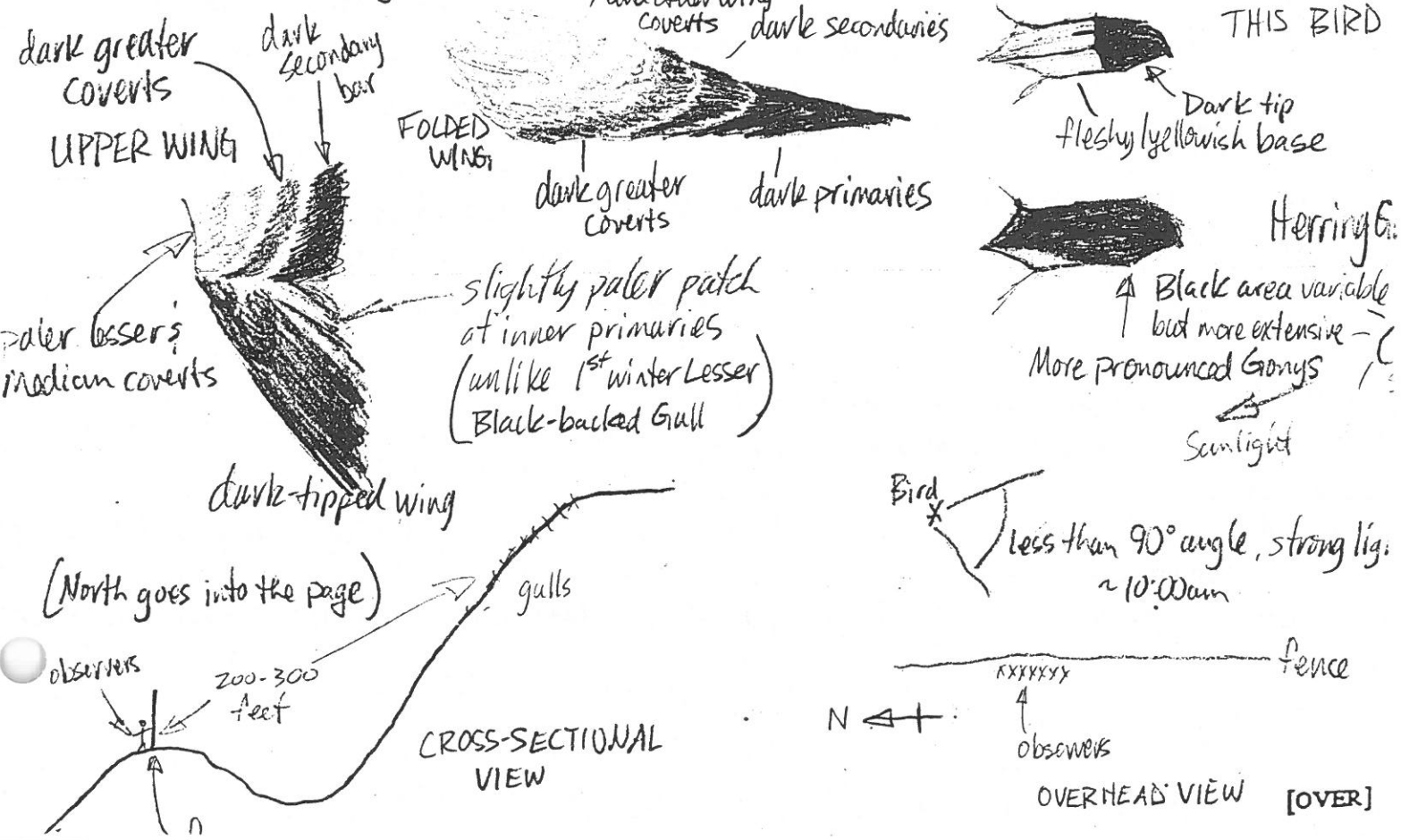
Mailing address: [REDACTED]

Others agreeing with identification: Peter Wieber, Bob & Karen Fisher (See 17 below).

Observers NOT agreeing with identification: None to my knowledge

6. Physical description (size, shape, proportions; details of both color and pattern on the head, back, breast, undertail, wings, and tail; coloration of bill, eye, legs and feet) of details actually seen in the field:

Slightly smaller than Herring Gull, proportionately smaller-headed & thinner-billed than Herring Gull. Sharply-defined black tip on fleshy-yellowish bill, reminiscent of color pattern in the bill of 1<sup>st</sup> winter Glaucous Gull. Dark eye, typical of a first winter gull.



Species: California Gull, 1<sup>st</sup> winter Date seen: 98.12.12 Observer: Jonathan Simms

7. Description of behavior:

Bird flew into view and perched on the ground. It moved about, opening its wings twice, but was relatively inactive until flushed when a Red-tailed Hawk alerted all the gulls at this location. At this point, the bird was lost in the chaos and not relocated.

8. Description of vocalizations:

None noted.

9. Description of immediate and surrounding habitat(s):

Land-fill site: earth & garbage.

10. Viewing conditions:

Optical equipment (type, power): Leica BA Ultra 10x42 bins, Swarovski Binom scope w/ 20-60x zoom

Distance / how measured? 200-300 feet, estimated

Time(s) of observation: Exact time not recorded, but ~10:00am Total time of observation: 2-4 minutes

Weather (including larger weather patterns where relevant) / sky conditions / relative position of sun:

Not a cloud in the sky; strong, direct sunlight.

11. Previous experience with this and similar species:

Exhaustive experience with Herring Gull; only adult California Gulls seen previously (N. Dakota; Niagara Falls, Ontario); 14 years intensive gull-watching experience.

12. Reasons for eliminating other similar species and/or hybrids:

Relative to first winter Herring Gull: smaller headed, thinner-billed slightly smaller bird with very sharply-defined, two-toned bill. There was no hint of any dark along the gape four 1/5 the base of the bill. In the perched bird, there was a distinctive dark band in the greater (secondary) coverts that was a similar color to the secondaries but darker than the median & lesser coverts (as well as the scapulars and back). This was also seen as the bird initially flew into view and when it opened its wings while moving about. Dark eye rules-out 2<sup>nd</sup> winter Herring Gull.

13. Were photos obtained?

By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Attached? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Books & illustrations consulted, and advice received. How did these influence this description?

National Geographic 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; identification conclusive. I knew what this bird was as soon as I saw it. Text and illustrations confirmed identification.

5. How long after observation were field notes recorded? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How long after observation was this form completed? 12 hours

7. Additional remarks:

Neither Bob nor Karen Fisher were 100% convinced of the bird's ID, possibly due to inexperience with this age of this species. Peter's input, however, was crucial because he compared the distinguishing features of this bird with a similarly aged California Gull seen previously at Lake Springfield; all characteristics of the two birds matched very well, according

Date \_\_\_\_\_

98.12.12