

RARE SPECIES DOCUMENTATION

Records of Vermont Birds

The following form has been prepared to encourage full documentation, when requested, of rare or unseasonal birds in the state of Vermont. These reports are put into a permanent file and should be as detailed as possible. New reports are reviewed annually by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, which evaluates records for their acceptability to future researchers and for inclusion in the state bird list.

Please print or type

SPECIES: Sabine's Gull

NUMBER OBSERVED: 1

OBSERVER MAKING REPORT: OTHER OBSERVERS (and addresses if available)
Jim Mead, 798 Metcalf Drive, Williston, VT 05495

LOCATION: (place, township, county) Delta Park in Colchester, Chittenden County, VT

DATE: December 3rd, 2016

TIME AND LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 8:37 a.m. for about 5 minutes.

DISTANCES FROM BIRD: Maximum- 1 mile Minimum- 1/2 mile

WEATHER:

wind direction- NW wind speed- 12 mph

sky cover- completely cloudy light in relation to observer's position temperature- behind me but no sunlight

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: (make, power, etc.)
Kowa TSN-884 Promiser 20-60 power lens.

OBSERVER'S PREVIOUS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THIS SPECIES OR SIMILAR FORMS:
I have only ever seen juveniles. 1 in 2007, 1 in 2011, 1 in 2014 on 4 different days and all 3 were seen at the Charlotte Town Beach.

OTHER DOCUMENTATION: Photo _____ Tape Recording _____ Specimen _____

If yes to the above, where is this information deposited? _____

HABITAT: (be as detailed as possible, include associated bird species)
Lake Champlain on a day with strong winds out of the NW and white caps. Other species were 10 Ring-billed Gulls, 3 Mallards and 23 Canada Geese.

BIRD'S BEHAVIOR: (feeding actions, manner of flight, displays or interactions, reaction to observer)
This bird was flying into the wind, rising up and then back down to the water's surface. I think it was picking food off the surface. It was by itself but at one point a Ring-billed Gull passed by it and showed a conspicuous size difference, as it was much larger than the Sabine's. I watched the Sabine's for about 5 minutes straight and would did take my eye away from the scope in fear that I would lose sight of it. It was in flight the entire time of my observation.

VOCALIZATION: (song or calls)- none heard.

DESCRIPTION: (Describe what you actually saw during the observation. We hope that observers will take field notes during the observation and before consulting field guides, etc. Additional pages with sketches and copies of field notes are encouraged.)

Relative size and shape: Small gull about the size of a Bonaparte's Gull. Pointed wings, shortish dark bill and a

straight edged tail (not rounded like a Bonaparte's). Striking pattern on the upper side of the gull. Crisp and clean lines delineating three different colored areas of the wings and body.

Head (crown, cheeks, eye, throat, nape): The forehead, face and throat were white. The nape and back half of the top and back of head were brownish.

Feet and Bill (shape, color, length): I did not see the feet or legs but the bill was short & black.

Upper back: The entire upper side of the body was brownish. That coloration went from the middle of the head to the base of the tail (including the rump) and reached across each inner wing along the leading edge from the base of the wing near the shoulder to the wrist and from the wrist, diagonally back toward the base of the tail.

Lower back and rump: See above description.

Wings (shape, length, markings): Fairly sizable wings that came to a point at their tips. The outer wings showed a solid black leading edge that went from the wrist to somewhere in the middle of the primary wingtips, forming a triangular type of shape. The rest of the outer wing and the rest of the inner wing that the previously described brownish area did not cover, were completely white (including the trailing edge in those areas). That white area also formed a triangular type of shape. The underside of the wings appeared light colored.

Breast, belly, flanks, undertail coverts: The front of breast, belly, flanks and under tail coverts were white. There was a bit of brown coloration on the sides of the neck/breast.

Tail (shape, length, markings): The tail from above and below was white, looked straight across at the tip and showed a black terminal band.

IMPORTANT: WHAT SIMILAR SPECIES WERE ELIMINATED WHEN MAKING THIS IDENTIFICATION AND HOW WAS THIS BIRD DIFFERENT?

There are several small gulls to compare this Sabine's to so I will address some of them one at a time. A Little Gull juvenile would show a rather bold black M or W pattern formed along the leading edge of the outer wing from the tip to the wrist and diagonally from the wrist to the base of the tail. This Sabine's did not have any black coloration along the diagonal line from the wrist to the base of the tail. A Bonaparte's Gull juvenile can easily be eliminated because it would show a black trailing edge across the entire length of the wing and it also would have a rounded tail tip. A Black-headed Gull in all plumages would show a white triangular shape along the leading edge of the outer wing, not a black one like this Sabine's. A Ross's Gull juvenile also has a similar M or W pattern on the wings as the Little Gull juvenile, thus eliminating it because of the diagonal line being black. It would also show a wedge shaped tail. Even though a Black-legged Kittiwake juvenile is much larger than a Sabine's Gull, it too needs to be looked at because of the M or W pattern on the wings. Once again it too can be eliminated because of the diagonal being black. This bird however, comes closest to matching the large white triangular area of the Sabine's as previously described above.

COMMENTS: (was age or sex determined?, etc.) The brown coloration of the upper parts of the body and the black terminal band on the tail, age this bird as a juvenile.

This report was written from notes taken during X immediately after _____ the observation, or written from memory _____ (please attach copies of notes if available)

NAME (print) Jim Mead SIGNATURE (not req'd) _____

MAILING ADDRESS: 798 Metcalf Drive, Williston, VT 05495

DATE: December 4th, 2016.

Return electronically (preferred) to: vbrc@vtcostudies.org or mail to: Vermont Bird Records Committee, Vermont Center for Ecostudies, PO Box 420, Norwich, VT 05055