

1995-079B

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, *Larus marinus*

Peter H. Yaukey

March 26, 1995, on a delapidated pier on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at Bucktown, Jefferson Parish.

The following is a verbatim quote (though clarifying awkward word sequences, abbreviations, etc.) of my field notes from the time; I did not indicate what date they were written, but it is my custom to write details on the day of the sighting. I have no idea what references I consulted. The notes from my journal are on the reverse, together with a drawing.

“Much larger than adjacent Herring Gull. Solidly black back. Folded wings mottled gray-brown and sooty, dark on the folded primaries. Folded tail white, with weak subterminal dark spots visible dorsally. Head and underparts white (very little if any mottling). Bill with yellow from base to gonys, where black ring around bill and red spot; pale whitish tip. Legs gray. Eye looked dark (but distant). Heavy beak, mean-scowled look (flat forehead). Viewed with Nikon Classic Eagle 8x40 binoculars, at a distance of perhaps 35 meters, light fine. Viewed from north and northwest, afternoon.”

As I write this, I realize that my original wording should have been “viewed TO the north and northwest” because this is the way the pier is viewed from shore.

The bird is separable from Herring gull by the black back and much larger size, and this is supported by the whiteness of the head. The bird is also separable from Lesser Black-backed by the large size, and black (not dark slate) back, and the heavy beak and scowling look with flat forehead. The bird is separable from Kelp Gull by the large size; Kelp should be Herring-sized. I have seen thousands of Great Black-backed, of all ages, in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, and elsewhere on the East Coast and one other in Louisiana.

I am sure of this observation. Peter Yaukey 3/20/00

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