

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review (to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for). Attach additional pages as necessary. Please print or type. Attach xerox of field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. English and Scientific names: Mew Gull, *Larus canus*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
One 1st-cycle bird
3. Locality: Parish: Caddo
Specific Locality: Cross Lake
4. Date(s) when observed: 10 January 2016
5. Time(s) of day when observed: 1615-1645 CST
6. Reporting observer and address: Robert C. Dobbs, Lafayette, LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): Charlie Lyon, Mac Myers, Paul Conover, Phillip Wallace, Dave Patton, Dan O'Malley, Terry Davis, Ronnie Maum, and Larry Raymond
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Bright light of clear winter sky, at low/late afternoon angle
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Swarovski 8x30 binos, good condition
11. Distance to bird(s): as close as 20 m
12. Duration of observation: 30 min
13. Habitat: open water
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): We spent the entire day searching most of Cross Lake, scanning virtually all open water, and seeking

out virtually all congregations of gulls, which we attracted with popcorn and sorted through carefully. As suggested by Charlie Lyon, we returned to the locality where he originally discovered the bird about 1600 CST, in hopes that gulls returning to roost on the lake would settle there, as they had when he had originally discovered the Mew Gull on 1 January 2016. We indeed found about 1000 Ring-billed Gulls at that locality and, within 15 min of throwing popcorn and searching responsive gulls, Mac Myers spotted the Mew Gull as if flew among the Ring-bills.

Throughout our observation, the Mew Gull was primarily foraging in the immediate vicinity of our boat, attracted by popcorn and/or the foraging behavior of other gulls, mainly Ring-billed Gulls. The Mew Gull also spent a fair amount of time resting on water and preening, also in the company of Ring-billed Gulls. The Mew Gull was fairly aggressive, despite being slightly smaller than the Ring-bills, with a slightly more petite build, and generally held its own in the chaotic center of feeding activity, going after popcorn.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species): Generally similar to Ring-billed Gull in body size/structure, in flight. On the water, particularly when next to RBGU, the bird's slightly smaller, more "petite" build, distinctly dove-like head shape, and smaller/thinner bill were clear (differences in bill size/structure were also quite obvious in flight, when close; see photos). The bill was two-tone in color, yellowish-flesh colored on the basal half, black on the distal half. The eye was dark, an effect that was accentuated by blackish feathering in the orbital area, set off from the otherwise pale-brownish color of the head. Feet appeared to be dull flesh colored(w/ bluish tones?), with legs having a slightly more greenish-yellow tone (but not sure how much low sun angle affected this). The bird was superficially similar to 1st-cycle Ring-billed Gull in plumage, but was generally browner/darker and less contrasty overall (see Similar Species, below). Pale brownish underparts and head plumage, with paler (whitish) face and darker brownish nape; mantle gray w/ brown tones. Tail all dark/brown, with wide brownish-black tail band and distinctly brownish upper- and under-tail coverts. Upperwing: blackish outer primaries, primary coverts, and secondaries (at least outer webs), grayish-brown inner primaries and greater secondary coverts, and mostly-brownish lesser and median secondary coverts. Relatively little contrast among blacks, browns, and grays of mantle and upperwings (e.g., compared with 1st-cycle Ring-billed Gull).

16. Voice: not vocal, to my knowledge

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Ring-billed Gull is the only white-headed gull of similar (small) size, and the only candidate for confusion. RBGU eliminated by the bird's smaller and thinner bill (direct comparisons), distinctly dove-like head shape (direct comparisons), and generally browner plumage,

which seemed less contrasty, especially on the upperwing/mantle. In particular, the tail was darker overall than RBGU due to a wider dark tail band, and darker upper- and under-tail coverts. Other notably dark/brownish features, apparent in the field and in the photos of the bird, were the underwing coverts and the orbital area.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? Attached?): Many photos obtained by all observers. A few of my photos are attached here.

19. Previous experience with this species: I was familiar with the structural differences between Mew and Ring-billed gulls (e.g., bill, head shape), having seen many adults on the west coast, but had rarely taken the opportunity to study young Mew Gulls.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: none

b. after observation: Nat Geo, Sibley

21. This description is written from: _____ notes made during the observation (_____notes attached?); notes made after the observation (date: 11 January 2016); _____memory; photos taken during observation..

22. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: Yes, positive

23. Date: 14 January 2016 Time: 1900 CST

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? Yes _____

If yes, may we include your name with the report? Yes _____

[Return to LBRC Page](#)