

3-1996

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Roberson, Don and Carratello, Rita, "First Record of Glaucous-Winged Gull for Nebraska" (1996). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 867.
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FIRST RECORD OF GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL FOR NEBRASKA

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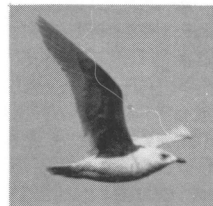
During Easter vacation in 1995, we visited the western Great Plains in search of dancing prairie-chickens and grouse. We started in southeastern Colorado and planned on driving to the Bessey Division, Nebraska National Forest, where we had reservations at photo blinds. But at dawn on 10 April, a huge blizzard began howling and worsened during the drive through Kansas. By the time we reached western Nebraska, our excursion stalled at Ogallala when Interstate 80 was closed due to high winds and snow. It was becoming apparent that we would not make it to our planned destination.

Stranded in Ogallala, we noticed that an article by Richard Rosché (1994) mentioned locales where prairie-chickens might be seen from nearby roadsides. We telephoned Rosché, who suggested alternatives to try at dawn northeast of Lake McConaughy.

At dawn on 12 April 1995, we crept out along the road toward Arthur through the sandhills. The road was still icy and half-covered with snow, but the storm and terrible winds had dissipated. Amazingly enough (at least to us), we found displaying Greater Prairie-Chickens within the first mile northeast of the lake, and we also had two Sharp-tailed Grouse feeding on a bare patch in the snow.

Returning to town for breakfast, we stopped to look at gulls at both ends of Kingsley Dam. While scoping a flock of gulls at the north end of Lake McConaughy, Roberson found a first-winter Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, which proved to be one of the latest records for Nebraska. When we stopped at the south end of the dam, Roberson almost immediately saw a first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* in flight around the towers just above the dam. Since we see this species virtually every winter day near our home on the Monterey Peninsula, California, we immediately recognized this species.

Although we did not know that this species was previously unrecorded in Nebraska, we recognized that it was rare. Roberson obtained photos, one of which is shown on the right, and took the following description (abbreviated notes edited into full sentences):



"One first-winter bird was circling around green towers at the south end of the dam; it was always in flight with a couple of first-winter Herrings [*L. argentatus*], a first-winter California [*L. californicus*], and several Ring-billed [*L. delawarensis*] gulls. It was as large as or slightly larger than the Herring Gull, with a heavy, all-blackish bill (slightly paler base of lower mandible seen only in scope -- looks all-black in binoculars). The body and mantle were rather uniform pale whitish-tan with a pale-gray cast to remiges. The entire remiges and tail were uniform whitish-tan; not clean-white like Glaucous but the same color and tone as the body. The tail lacked any suggestion of a tail band -- the entire rectrices were similarly uniform to remiges; the latter lacked a 'secondary bar.' This is the standard 'pale-end' first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull with which I'm so familiar on the Monterey Peninsula. No hint of hybridization: e.g., no darkening of primaries, no atypical bill, no 'duskiness' to plumage. I took a series of flight shots. Eye dark; legs tucked into body (it's very cold out) and not viewed."

First-winter Glaucous-winged Gulls are distinctive because

other large gulls have either blackish primaries (much darker than the wing coverts) or white primaries (e.g., Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*). There are intermediate birds which show introgressive darkening in the remiges because of hybridization between the Glaucous-winged Gull and the Western Gull *L. occidentalis* in Washington (Hoffman et al. 1978). Such intermediate birds have occurred in the interior of the Pacific Northwest (Weber 1981). Since we see such intermediates routinely in California, Roberson looked for any suggestion of introgression and found none. Some Thayer's Gulls *L. thayeri* at the pale end of the *L. thayeri/glaucoides* cline have wingtip patterns similar to that of the Glaucous-winged Gull, but these birds were eliminated by the absence of a tail band and by this bird's larger size and heavier, longer bill.

We again telephoned Rosché, leaving a message on his machine, to alert interested local observers. We understand that he refound the bird on 15 April. Our bird proved to be the first record of the Glaucous-winged Gull in Nebraska. The record has been submitted to the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee and is currently under review (J. Gubanyi, pers. comm.). A photograph appeared in Grzybowski (1995), who termed it "perhaps the find of the season."

Binford and Johnson (1995) documented a recent winter-range expansion of the Glaucous-winged Gull into the interior of North America. They listed 97 acceptable records for interior states and provinces, including Colorado, North Dakota, and Illinois. The southernmost record for the Great Plains is from Oklahoma: an adult collected at Capron on 15 February 1912 (Sutton 1938). Binford and Johnson (1995) attribute this range expansion to a burgeoning coastal breeding population and the presence of dumps and inland reservoirs, especially those with hydroelectric dams. Kingsley Dam on Lake McConaughy is now well-known for its attractiveness to vagrant gulls (Rosché 1994), and our record is consistent with the ongoing spread of this bird into the North American interior.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Richard and Dorothy Rosché for their help in reviving our trip, and we thank Kevin Zimmer for initial help in planning the adventure. Laurence C. Binford, Louisiana State University Museum of Natural History, read an earlier draft of this paper and offered constructive comments.

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