

fenced-in lawn next to the river.

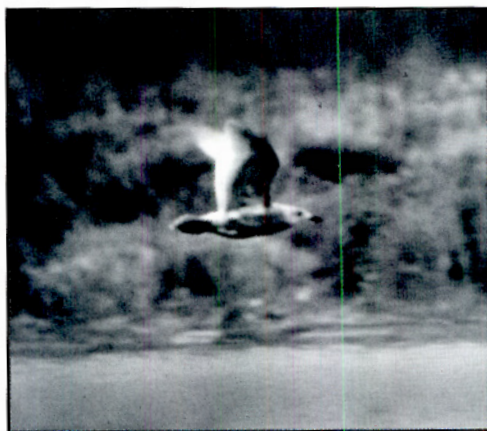
Almost immediately Augustine noticed a gull that had a very different appearance, being bulkier than a Herring Gull and almost uniform pale brownish-gray. The wing tips and tail were no darker than the rest of the plumage, whereas in a young Herring Gull these parts are blackish. The observers also noticed that the gull had a very thick, apparently all-black bill. Then, much to the group's frustration, the mystery gull hunkered down on the grass, went to sleep, and was nearly blocked from view by arriving Herring Gulls.

Needing to move some of the obscuring rows of Herring Gulls, the birders began some slow arm waving, resulting in all the gulls flying away! Fortunately, Augustine and Stokie were able to track the bird in flight until it landed on the Calumet River. Now all the birders obtained a better look, and Sigler even viewed the gull through his Questar. But the gull swam toward the opposite bank and disappeared. About ten minutes later all the gulls from the dump arose and circled higher and higher. They were then joined by the river gulls, and the entire group flew east toward Lake Michigan.

Augustine suggested that the unknown gull might be a glaucous-winged in first basic (first-winter) plumage, but this is a bird normally found only along the Pacific coast. Although nothing they saw would rule out this identification, Sigler felt that eliminating hybrids, such as between Glaucous-winged and Western (*Larus o. occidentalis*) Gulls, would be difficult. An estimate of their viewing time was 8 to 10 minutes when the bird was on the ground and in the water. While it was in flight, Augustine and Stokie saw it for only a few seconds, and Sigler did not see it at all. The group agreed it would be necessary to see the gull again for a longer period, especially in flight. They also felt that for this record to be

accepted by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC), more birders would have to see the bird, particularly someone more experienced with immature west coast gulls.

Fortunately, the gull remained in the Lake Calumet area through 12 December 1992 and was seen by scores of birders. Most observations were adjacent to the O'Brien Lock and Dam, either on the Calumet River,



*Glaucous-winged Gull flying above O'Brien Lock and Dam, Chicago, Cook County. 9 Dec. 1992.*  
*Photo by David B. Johnson.*

a frozen pond, or the Calumet Industrial District dump. On days when this dump was closed, the bird was observed from the Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve boat launch on the Little Calumet River adjacent to the Dolton dump.

## Description

The following description was compiled from color photographs (Johnson, J. B. Milosevich, D. Oehmke), a sketch (Marcisz), a videotape (Johnson), and eight written descriptions (the authors, L. Augustine, R. Chapel, J. E. Landing, and J. B. Milosevich; on file with IORC). Nearby Herring Gulls afforded excellent direct comparisons standing, swimming, and flying. *See accompanying photographs.*

**Size and shape.** Overall size approximately same as Herring Gull, but neck and chest bulkier; humorously but aptly described as "built like a Herring Gull on steroids." Primary extension beyond tail less than 1 inch, much shorter than Herring Gull and contributing to stocky appearance.

**Head and neck shape.** Head larger and neck thicker than Herring Gull, but head shape the same, with well-sloped forehead and moderately rounded crown.

**Bill.** Key marks separating this bird from Herring Gull: bill length approximately same as Herring Gull, but height greater and similar to Western Gull; color black, perhaps with some paling at base, as suggested by some photos and the video; nail heavy, with a whitish tip, and gonydeal angle pronounced, giving tip a bulbous aspect compared to base.

**Head and neck color.** Head pale brownish-gray, darkest in front of and below eye, this forming a faint "mask," and palest on forehead and crown. Neck pale brownish-gray. Chin and throat white.

**Eye.** Appeared small and dorsally located; iris dark brown.

**Back and scapulars.** Uniform dusky gray, grayer, less brownish, than upperwing coverts.

**Rump, tail coverts, and tail.** Rump conspicuously pure white, contrasting with grayish back and plain brownish-gray tail. Uppertail and undertail coverts whitish, distinctly barred with brownish-gray.

**Legs and feet.** Fleshy pink, slightly darker than herring. Legs thicker and "knobbier-kneed" than herring.

**Wings.** From above, remiges uniform pale brownish-gray, browner and slightly darker than back and similar to upperwing coverts and tail. No darker secondary bar. Inner primaries faintly paler than outers (in flight). Outer primaries narrowly tipped with whitish like Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*).