

Glaucous-winged Gull (center) with Herring Gulls in Chicago Industrial District landfill near O'Brien Lock and Dam, Chicago, Cook County. 9 Dec. 1992. Photo by David B. Johnson.

Unlike Herring Gull, upperwing coverts rather uniform brownish-gray, with very faint buffy brownish mottling on lesser and median coverts and even less conspicuous mottling on greater coverts. From below in flight, remiges silvery-gray, much paler than above but not translucent, and underwing coverts slightly darker brownish-gray than upper-wing coverts. Axillars pale grayish.

Breast, flanks, and belly. Brownishgray, obscurely mottled with whitish and with a buffy tint (probably adventitious). Overall impressions. Although descriptions of overall color varied from uniform "grayish" to "light grayish-brown," or "coffee with lots of cream," there is no doubt about the brownish cast. Either because of optics, lighting conditions, or differing sensory perceptions, some observers could not always discern the brownish tint, particularly on the upperwing coverts, flanks, and belly. In flight the bird looked wide-winged and had labored wing beats similar to a Glaucous Gull, and from below the silvery-gray primaries and secondaries contrasted beautifully with the brownish-gray wing linings.

## Age

Most reviewers and observers (including the authors) categorized this gull as in second basic (secondwinter) plumage, based on the white rump, dusky-gray back, rather uniform scapulars and upperwing coverts, and pale culmen nail (compare plates 534 and 537 in Grant 1986). However, second basic Glaucouswinged Gulls typically have a clear gray back contrasting with brownishgray wings, more white on the head and underparts, and up to 50% of the bill pale (D. Paulson in litt.). The almost entirely black bill and largely dusky plumage of the Lake Calumet bird are more typical of mid winter first basic plumage (D. Paulson in litt.; W. Russell pers. comm.). Glaucous-winged and Western Gulls, perhaps more than any other large gulls, vary in the intensity of markings on their upperwing coverts in first basic plumage; some are contrastingly marked, whereas others are almost unicolor (Paulson in litt.). J. Morlan (in litt.) warns that the timing and aspect of plumages in large Larus gulls is so variable that ageing is

In regard to age, we believe that the early date (27 November) of the Calumet bird is pertinent. Prebasic molt of the contour feathers normally is completed by mid October but may extend to at least mid November (Verbeek 1993). If the bird were less than a year old, a greatly advanced molt sequence, one embracing at least the first prealternate (first-spring) molt, would be needed to account for the white rump, gravish back, somewhat white-mottled head and underparts, and rather uniform upperwing coverts. If on the other hand, the gull were over one year old, we need to envision a retardation of the second

prebasic molt by only a month or so, in our opinion a far more likely scenario. Thus we believe the Calumet bird was in its second calendar year, molting slightly late from first alternate (first-summer) to second basic (second-winter) plumage.

## **Identification**

All observers were confident of the identification based on the observed characters. But many people wondered if hybrids between Glaucous-winged and Western, Glaucouswinged and Herring, Glaucouswinged and Glaucous, and Glaucous and Herring Gulls could be eliminated.

All similar species were eliminated. Thayer's Gull, although somewhat similar in plumage coloration, is smaller-bodied and smaller-billed and has a long-winged profile at rest, a dark secondary bar, more sharply mottled and checkered upperwing coverts, and wing tips that are usually darker than the mantle. Glaucous Gull usually is larger-bodied and has a distinctly bicolored bill in first and second winters, paler body plumage (often extremely white), translucent primaries, and a marbled tail. Iceland