

As the day progressed, other birders began to arrive: Travis from Decatur and Joe Eades, Dave Rogles, and Tom Bormann from the St. Louis area. Disguised as listers, these guys come to study the prey and learn the tactics used in the successful hunt. The show-and-tell birding continued through the afternoon. Five more birders joined the ardent group of larophiles: Charley Marbut; Charlene and Jim Malone; and Mark and Mike Seiffert. While Tom and Travis secured great photographs, we jokingly called the gull a miniature Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*). The discussion closed with the loss of daylight. All the field marks fit 'Kamchatka' Gull, but one feather, P8, also fit third-cycle Mew Gull.

The field marks were clearly on the outer limits for the expected North American race of Mew Gull, and all were consistent with 'Kamchatka' Gull. Therefore, 'Kamchatka' Gull identification was researched and suggested. The Carlyle gull's structure was the base identifying feature that, when considered together with the plumage characteristics, seemed to eliminate Mew Gull. The following list of features describes the Carlyle gull as compared with Ring-billed Gull. Features highlighted in

bold underlined text are offered as attributes noted in the subject gull that are not present, or are rare, in the North American race of Mew Gull, and thus strongly support the identification as 'Kamchatka' Gull.

Photos and field descriptions were quickly posted online to not only alert the Illinois birding community to the presence of this bird (a great bird, no matter what subspecies), but also to entice discussion on this gull's identity. Information was circulated via several internet sources, which included Illinois Birders Exchanging Thoughts (IBET), the Illinois Birders' Forum, Surfbirds, and Frontiers of Identification (ID-Frontiers). The identification of this gull as a likely 'Kamchatka' Gull was supported. No doubt the photographs from Tom Bormann, Frank Holmes, and Travis Mahan made identification a possibility (See Figures 1-4). Alvaro Jaramillo set the tone (via ID-Frontiers): "I was just doing a gull class this weekend and we had the pleasure of looking at 200+ Mew Gulls and no bird looked like yours, I mean that is a huge Mew Gull with a big bill and very thick legs." After presenting a comprehensive critique of the Carlyle gull's structure and dimensions, Martin Reid sum-

marized his thoughts as follows (via ID-Frontiers): "Thus we have a gull that has a plumage and apparent biometrics that is typical in almost all known respects (and possible fairly typical for the eye color at this age) for 'Kamchatka' Gull." Norman D. van Swelm also found the 'Kamchatka' Gull identification appealing: "A bird this big can only belong to the most easterly and largest of the canus forms: kamtschatschensis!" A response to descriptions of the Carlyle gull's vocalizations was posted on ID-Frontiers by Louis Bevier: "the calls described sound pretty far outside what is typical of Mew Gull."

Collectively, the *Larus canus* subspecies maintain a broad distribution throughout the northern hemisphere: Mew Gull breeds in northwestern North America and is the only form of *Larus canus* in North America; Common Gull (*Larus canus canus*) breeds in western Asia and Europe; Russian Gull (*Larus canus heinei*) breeds in central Asia and Russia; and 'Kamchatka' Gull (*Larus canus kamtschatschensis*) breeds in eastern Asia and Siberia. The 'Kamchatka' Gull's range in eastern Siberia basically mirrors the range of Mew Gull in Alaska and western Canada. This

#### Body:

- Nearly a full adult in basic plumage
- Equal in size to nearby Ring-billed Gulls
- Full-headed with sloped profile
- Medium dark-gray back with wide white tertial and scapular crescents
- Black primaries with white apical spots on P5, P6 (small), and P7 tiny
- All-white tail
- Dusky-brown streaking on head, gathering on nape and forming crescent markings on chest
- Dark-gray back with slight brown (iridescent) cast to upperwing coverts
- Greenish-based parallel-edged bill, equal in length to the bills of nearby Ring-billed Gulls
- Bill with diffused sub-terminal dark band with yellow tip
- Small brown eye with black pupil
- Blue-green leg coloration

#### Open wing:

- Wingtips black with black markings present on outer four primary coverts
- Large mirrors present on P9 and P10
- Thin gray tongue on inner web of P8
- Deep gray tongues with white tips (pearls) on P5, P6, and P7
- Small black markings (broken bar) on webs of P4
- Dark markings on primary coverts and alula
- Wide white trailing edge on inner secondaries, narrowing on outer secondaries
- Underwings of remiges smoky gray

#### Voice (not recorded):

- A preliminary comparison of vocalizations heard in the field with commercial recordings of the various subspecies seemed to fit best with the North American race; however, there were very few 'Kamchatka' recordings from which to compare, which may not have contained calls from similar feeding situations.