



Mew Gull, Lake Athabasca, June 1960

Fred Lahrman

MEW GULL SIGHTING AT REINDEER LAKE, MANITOBA

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At 11:15 a.m., DST, on June 29, 1974, Douglas R. Storey, a Manitoba government wildlife technician, and I observed an adult Mew Gull on a small rocky island in the Manitoba portion of Reindeer Lake. The island (42' N, 101° 54' W) was approximately 2 ha in size and was used as a nesting site by 90-100 Common Gulls. Fifteen Herring Gulls and 16 Ring-billed Gulls were also seen in the vicinity of the island.

The Mew Gull was observed under ideal weather conditions for five minutes both at rest and in flight. The physical characteristics observed were: larger than Ring-billed Gull; short, dark, pale green bill; slightly shorter, yellowish-green legs; outer primaries which contained a more noticeable amount of white than the inner primaries. It appeared relatively tame and twice it perched on a tree snag 12 meters from us, the only gull to do so. It did not call during our observations and was not seen on subsequent visits to the island.

Mew Gulls are known to nest in colonies as well as solitary pairs. Nests are generally on the ground in the vicinity of lakes or on islands but nesting in trees is not unknown. The

species, which breeds throughout the southern Yukon, adjacent areas of the Northwest Territories and northwestern and coastal British Columbia, also breeds in northwestern Saskatchewan.¹ Mew Gulls, however, have been reported at several locations in northeastern Saskatchewan, including Reindeer Lake, where sightings go back as far as 1914 when Angus Buchanan collected an adult female and saw another bird on July 9.³ More recently two or three pairs of these gulls were recorded in June and July, 1965, at a fish-filleting plant at Kinoosao.³ A male collected there on July 1 had testes measuring 12 mm. Kinoosao, which lies just inside Saskatchewan on Reindeer Lake, is almost 80 km southwest of the island where our observation was made. On July 20, 1965, the same party saw a Mew Gull only 32 km from our sighting, northwest across the Saskatchewan boundary on Reindeer Lake. The species, therefore, could occur throughout much of the Reindeer Lake area, perhaps even on a regular basis, though in small numbers. One could expect a few to overlap into the Manitoba portion of Reindeer Lake and even possibly breed there.

To date, there have been two reports of Mew Gulls elsewhere in the province, both from Churchill. A single bird was seen near the grain elevator on June 23, 1967.² It was reported to have remained in the area for a few days and was seen by several other observers. The second Churchill sighting comes from Alf H. Rider of Forest, Ontario, (pers. comm., 1976) who carefully observed an adult bird there on June 10 of that year. This bird was seen in the vicinity of the granary ponds and was notably tame. No specimen has been collected and it is not currently listed under irregular occurrence on the field check-list of Manitoba birds.

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¹GODFREY, E. W. 1966. The birds of Canada. Nat. Mus. Canada Bull. 203. Ottawa. 428 pp.

²JEHL, J. R. Jr. and SMITH, B. A. 1970. Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba. Manitoba Mus. and Nat. Hist. Soc. Spec. Pub. 1. Winnipeg. 87 pp.

³NERO, R. W. 1967. The birds of northeastern Saskatchewan, Nat. Hist. Soc. Spec. Pub. 6. Regina. 96 pp.

IVORY GULL AT CHURCHILL, MANITOBA



Steve B

Steve and Josephine Blanich (Box 96, Crosby, Minnesota) observed an Ivory Gull at Churchill daily from June 9 to 12, 1976. In addition, they reported seeing Parula, Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Glaucous Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Bonaparte Gull and about two dozen Sabine's Gulls, as well as 72 other species. Churchill continues to be a spectacular place to visit to see unusual birds! J. R. Jehl and B. A. Smith (Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba, 1970) list the Ivory Gull as hypothetical. The colour slide from which the above photo was taken provides evidence of its occurrence at Churchill.