

THAYER'S GULL ON LAKE KATEPWA,

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During the afternoon of 18 April 1984 Manley Callin, John Nelson, Joe Thomson and I were at the west end of Lake Katepwa in the Qu'Appelle Valley glassing a sandbar which was crowded with loafing gulls, practically all of which were adult Ring-billed Gull. In my scope one of them facing us clearly had pink legs and that part of its mantle which could be seen was darker than its close neighbour, a Ring-billed Gull, so I directed the attention of the others to what I thought was a Herring Gull.

As we studied it, the bird moved its head so that we had a profile view. We could then note the relatively small bill with the red spot at the end, the small head and its dark eye.

John reached for Peterson then handed it around opened at page 87, pointing out as he did so that the only dark-eyed, pink-legged gull in adult plumage was Thayer's Gull.⁵ It was a lifer for all of us! It was the first one reported to Manley for the Qu'Appelle Valley.

Thayer's Gull is on the Saskatchewan list by virtue of a specimen obtained by R.W. Nero 9 June 1960 near Beaverlodge Lake, just north of Lake Athabasca in northern Saskatchewan.⁴ It was then considered to be a subspecies of the Iceland Gull and was named *Larus glaucoides thayeri*. W.E. Godfrey formally recognized Thayer's Gull as a valid species in 1966 when "The Birds of Canada" was published.¹

Fortunately our bird was in full breeding dress and not in the more confusing subadult plumages. The identification of subadults can be a formidable task according to Lehman, and Gosselin and David.^{3 2}

Although we did not see the bird in flight we had three field marks on an adult so we

considered them to be sufficient. The dark eye and pink legs ruled out adult California Gull; the smaller head, finer bill and the dark eye ruled out adult Herring Gull; and the dark eye and dark mantle ruled out adult Iceland Gull.

- ¹ GODFREY, W.E. 1966. The birds of Canada. National Museums of Canada, Bulletin 203, Ottawa.
- ² GOSSELIN, M. and N. DAVID 1975. Field identification of Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) in eastern North America. *American Birds* 29(6):1059-1066.
- ³ LEHMAN, P. 1980. The identification of Thayer's Gull in the field. *Birding* 12(6):198-210.
- ⁴ NERO, R.W. 1983. Birds of the Lake Athabasca region, Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Natural History Society Special Publication 5, Regina.
- ⁵ PETERSON, R.T. 1980. A field guide to the birds east of the Rockies. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.



First winter Thayer's Gull, Regina Beach
Chris Adam