

CORRESPONDENCE

LITTLE GULL AT LAKE COUNTY, OHIO

[The following letter is published not as a record of this species for Ohio, because it does not conform to the reasonable rule that a record of so unusual a species must be accompanied by a specimen, but because it illustrates the way field observations ought to be made. Ed.]

Although this constitutes only a sight record of an extremely rare bird for any part of North America, the very fact makes me feel it a duty to report the same and to go into full detail as to the facts, especially since the bird in question could hardly be confused with any other small Gull occurring in the Western hemisphere. Full opportunity was given to study the bird at close range and all main characteristics were fully noted and carefully compared with Bonaparte Gulls before looking up descriptions in various bird publications to determine what my find could be.

December 29th, 1923, found me seated at the end of a stone break-water trying to identify with my glass a small bunch of ducks a long distance out on the lake. In the near foreground some two hundred Bonaparte Gulls were flitting about above the waves, individuals of which repeatedly crossed the vision afforded by my glass. Suddenly I thought I saw one with the entire under surface of wings a velvety black. In astonishment I lowered my glass to more easily pick it out from among the many others with the naked eye. And, sure enough, coming straight toward me, making me think of a big butterfly, was a little gull whose entire under wing surface looked a full black in comparison with the white body. Later, for I watched this bird fully an hour, I had determined the color to be really slate, though in comparison with the whites and gull blues of the large ever-changing flock of birds it looked as black as a crow. This color of under wing surface was fact No. 1 and the most easily noticed of all.

The next item secured was that of size. At first I thought it had a shorter tail than the Bonapartes but upon direct comparison again and again with companion birds I determined the entire bird to be shorter by at least two inches. This was especially noticeable when I compared body length only and left the beating wings out of the question. This constitutes fact No. 2. Later, on looking up measurements, I find the Little Gull to be about three inches shorter than the Bonaparte.

The bird at times would get lost among the others but could immediately be picked out again as soon as it flew towards me thus giving a view of the under surface of wings. At times it came within a rod or two, and it was during these near flights that I determined fact No. 3;—the top of head and upper neck were darker (smoky I called it) as though a suggestion of a summer hood remained. This was noticeable as the bird flew low over the water and away from the observer.

I caught one glimpse of the feet, which were red, but whether of the same shade as the Bonaparte I could not say. The bill was apparently black (which is correct for Little Gull in adult winter plumage,

though the base is dull red in nuptial attire; or so sayeth the books I read upon my return home.)

Leaving the place I had the above descriptions, and might have also seen a slight difference in the upper wings, but had about convinced myself I had only been observing a small Bonaparte with a strange melanistic phase of the under wing surface, for my mind had been busy as well as my eyes and I could *recall* no small gull that coincided with this one. However a plate in Butler's British Birds first started an enthusiastic reading bee, and one can imagine the sensation when I read the description of plumage and found all points agreed. Several other works on European birds were consulted before turning to Bent's Life Histories of American Gulls and Terns to learn its status quo in this country. I found everything to agree with my observations and nothing to disagree, even to the mention of its butterfly like flight.

Painesville, Ohio

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EXPLANATIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Since the appearance of the June (23) Bulletin containing my note on the "Bald Eagle in Franklin County, Ky.," I have received several letters of inquiry about my "list of birds of Franklin County" referred to in the note asking when and where it was published, etc. The list has not yet been published and exists only in manuscript. These notes and those in the September Bulletin (part of them at least) were hurriedly written at odd times and were portions of personal letters to my good friend and our efficient Secretary, Prof. Wilson, who very kindly abstracted them and arranged them for the Bulletin. Written to him so hastily, as above stated, I overlooked the fact that statements clear to him in the light of previous conversations and correspondence would not be so to the general reader. Hence the necessity of this and the following corrections.

September Bulletin, page 161, line 1. Sentence should read, "If we assume that there were two young doves in the first nest and four nestlings in each of the other three nests," etc.

Page 162, line 10. The point I was trying to make was this: along the road at this stretch were trees and some undergrowth and apparently the Whip-poor-will preferred the comparative shelter they afforded to the open road or open fields on either side, and therefore continued to fly alongside the road ahead of us for the distance mentioned. But if it sought concealment, why did it fly?

Page 163, line 17. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is **not** in my "List of Birds of Fulton County, Ky." published in the AUK in 1889 but is listed as quoted in a later supplemental list still in manuscript.

The quotation Swainson's Warbler is correct. The 1890-92-93 notes are from the supplemental list.

DR. L. OTLEY PINDAR.

Versailles, Ky., Feb. 15, 1924.