

Iceland Gull at Mt. Pleasant, S.C.

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

SIDNEY A GAUTHREAUX JR.

Department of Zoology, Clemson University
Clemson, S.C. 29631

22 July 1977

On 3 April 1977, LeGrand observed an immature white-winged gull on the extensive mudflats at the end of Pitt Street in Mt. Pleasant, Charleston County, S.C. With the help of a 30X scope, he immediately identified the bird as an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*). The gull was seen at midday near a small flock of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*). Several minutes later Gauthreaux arrived with the Clemson University ornithology class, and he concurred with LeGrand's identification. We observed the Iceland Gull for at least 30 minutes through Gauthreaux's 40X Questar scope. Light conditions were good, and the viewing distance was approximately 250 meters. Paul Hamel and John Cely, who were also with us, ventured out across the mudflats and observed the gull within 75 meters for 45 minutes with binoculars.

The Iceland Gull was quickly separated from the other gulls by its whitish plumage, appearing much paler than the other two species. It was intermediate in size between the Herring and Ring-billed gulls, but it had a more slender body than either. The clinching character was the bill—all dark and stubby, scarcely two-thirds the length of the Herring Gull's bill. The folded wings extended nearly 5 cm beyond the tail, though we feel that this field mark is not a great aid in identification. The gull was also observed in flight as it moved from one spot to another on the flats. The overall whitish plumage, with the white primaries, was clearly noted. We are familiar with both the Glaucous (*L. hyperboreus*) and Iceland gulls, having seen immature Glaucous Gulls on several occasions and having observed an immature Iceland at Clemson, S.C., in February 1976 (see above). The Mt. Pleasant bird seemed identical to the Clemson bird except for the somewhat whiter overall plumage of the former bird. Hamel and Cely noted that the Iceland, because of its small bill, had difficulty in swallowing certain food items that nearby Herring Gulls had no trouble in swallowing. Though neither had seen Glaucous or Iceland Gulls before, they are convinced that the white-winged gull was an Iceland.

Separation of the Iceland and Glaucous Gulls in the field is not an easy task. Hume (British Birds 68:24-37) has summarized the similarities and differences between the two species. Recently there has been considerable controversy in the Carolinas over the field identification of the Iceland Gull (see LeGrand, Am. Birds 31:321). We believe that part of the problem has been the inaccurate descriptions of field marks and the inadequacy of plumage illustrations in various field guides. The major guides say that the Iceland has a *slender* bill; however, the two Icelands that we have seen had bills that were noticeably *short*, giving the bill a *stubby* (not slender) and somewhat dove-like appearance. The all-dark bill also rules out the Glaucous, which always has the basal two-thirds of its bill yellow or flesh in color. The stubby bill, in our opinion, also helps distinguish the Iceland from the immature Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*), which has a bill similar in shape to those of the Ring-billed and Herring [based on photographs in Am. Birds 29 (6), front cover and p. 1065, and in The Birds of California, Arnold Small, p. 165]. Despite our failure to collect or photograph the bird, as neither a gun nor a camera was available, we remain fully convinced of our sighting.

Glaucous Gull on Pawleys Island, S.C.

BOB LEWIS and LISA LEWIS

308 E. Creswell Avenue
Greenwood, S.C. 29646

31 August 1977

On 23 January 1977 we were birding on Pawleys Island, Georgetown County, S.C., when I saw a very pale gull about a mile to the north resting on a sandbar. The time was