

SPECIES OF THE MONTH**ICELAND GULL****FEBRUARY 2024**

An adult Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides thayeri*) was reported 13 to 15 October 2023 at Lakeside Park in Tucson, Pima County. If accepted by the Arizona Bird Committee this will be the first record for Pima County and only the second for southeast Arizona. It may be the first adult Iceland Gull reported in the state. All Arizona records are of the *thayeri* subspecies, which was lumped with Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides kumlienii*) in 2017. The Thayer's subspecies breeds in the western Canadian Arctic islands and winters mostly along the west coast of North America and the Great Lakes. It is a casual fall and winter visitor to Arizona.

The Thayer's Gull was considered a subspecies of the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) until 1963, when it was given full species status, which continued for more than 50 years before it was lumped with Iceland Gull. Although the Herring Gull averages larger than Thayer's Gull, some larger individuals of the latter can overlap with smaller Herring Gulls, adding to the challenge of identification. At all ages the 2 species can resemble each other, and the Tucson bird was first identified as a Herring Gull. This individual was a large, white-headed gull with a pale gray mantle in basic adult plumage. A characteristic distinguishing it from Herring Gull was that the black on the primary tips was mainly limited to the outer webs, whereas the primary tips on Herring Gull are mostly black. The eyes were dark and, when seen well, showed a red orbital ring. Adult Herring Gulls would have a pale iris with an orange-yellow orbital ring. Its legs were deeper pink than those of a comparable-aged Herring Gull. Moreover, its bill was smaller and straighter and its head more rounded.



15 October 2023. Photo by Terry Rosenmeier