

First Indiana record of the California Gull (*Larus californicus*).

with a summary of recent eastern occurrences

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AT FIVE-THIRTY p.m. on July 19, 1980, while looking for early fall shorebird arrivals at Eagle Creek Reservoir in n.w. Indianapolis, I spotted a group of seven gulls standing next to the water. At first glance they all appeared to be Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) in adult plumage, but upon closer inspection, one bird was seen to differ from the other six. The most apparent difference was the lack of a complete black band on the bill which is characteristic of *delawarensis*, having instead an orange spot overlapped by a black bar at the gonydeal angle of the lower mandible.

The non-conforming gull was also slightly larger than the accompanying Ring-billeds but appeared to be of the same slender build. Its mantle was a darker shade of pearl-gray than that of the Ring-billeds, suggesting the possibility that it might be one of the European subspecies of the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*). The bird in question then walked out from between two of the accompanying birds, displaying its chrome-yellow legs, even brighter than those of the Ring-billeds. This did not entirely rule out the possibility of a Herring Gull, because several of the European subspecies possess yellow legs as well as dark mantles. At this point the bird began to preen itself, displaying wings which showed large subapical spots in the outermost two primaries. The definitive field mark was then observed, a dark-brown eye which neither *delawarensis* nor *argentatus* has in the adult plumage. The only larid that this could possibly be, was an adult California Gull (*Larus californicus*). I had previously seen large numbers of these birds in California, but never really expected to see one in Indiana.

The Kellers in their book, *Indiana Birds and their Haunts* (1979), do not

list this species for the state, but fortunately I was carrying my camera that was equipped with a 400 mm Vivitar lens (plus a 2x extender) and managed to take three recognizable photographs of the bird; thus documenting the first known occurrence of this species for Indiana.

IN THE LAST EIGHT YEARS a surprising number of California Gulls have been seen on the East Coast; there are also several inland records for the Great Lakes Region. A listing of these records follows: (all involve single birds)

- Oct. 26, 1974, Chicago, Ill.
- Apr. 5, 1975, St. Charles County, Mo.
- Oct. 10-12, 1975, Marquette, Mich.
- Mar. 24, 1978, Monroe County, Mich.
- Apr. 10, 1978, Detroit, Mich.
- Apr. 15, 1978, Mullet Key, Fla.
- July 27, 1978, Big Stone, Minn.
- Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 1978, Macomb, Mich.
- Oct. 10, 1978, Alexandria, Va.

- Oct. 4, 1978, Rockland County Park N.Y.
- late August 1979, Mille Lacs Lake, Minn.
- Sept. 21, 1979, Alexandria, Va.
- Oct. 3, 1979, Rockland County Park, N.Y.
- Oct. 17-30 and Nov. 6-13, 1979, Alton Dave, Ill.
- Nov. 24-25, 1979, Huron, Ohio
- Jan. 18, 1980, Port Credit, Ont.
- Jan. 26, 1980, Port Canaveral, Fla.
- July 7-8, 1980, Rochester, N.Y.
- Oct. 19, 1980, St. Petersburg, Fla.
- Oct. 28-29, 1980, Chicago, Ill.
- winter 1980-81, Rockland County Park, N.Y.
- May 10, 1981, e. of Baltimore, Md.
- June 30, 1981, Madison, Wis.
- winter 1981-82, Rockland County Park, N.Y.

The bird has also become a regular, if rare, winter visitor to the Toytown Dump in St. Petersburg, Florida. Two birds spent the winter of 1979-80 there.

This recent upsurge of records in the East may be partially due to increased sophistication on the part of observers, but it also leads one to wonder if some form of range expansion is occurring and if we easterners will be more frequently treated to the sight of *Larus californicus*.

The identification of this bird from photographs was verified by Guy McCaskie and Charles E. Keller, to whom I extend my thanks.

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California Gull, Eagle Creek Reservoir, Indianapolis, July 19, 1980. Photo/Timothy C. Keller.