

Ring-billed Gull: first for Ecuador and the Galapagos

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THE RING-BILLED GULL (*LARUS delawarensis*) is a North American breeder whose winter range extends as far south as Panama, where it is a rare but probably regular winter visitor on both coasts (Ridgely 1976). The normal winter range for this species is from southern British Columbia south along the Pacific coast to southern Mexico (casually to El Salvador), in the interior from the Great Lakes to central Mexico and the Gulf coast (south to the state of Yucatán) and along the Atlantic coast from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Florida, the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles (east to the Virgin Islands). It is casual in Costa Rica (Chomes) and the Lesser Antilles, south to Barbados (A.O.U. Checklist 1983). The Ring-billed Gull occurs every few years in the Hawaiian Islands, primarily during autumn and winter (R.L. Pyle, *pers. comm.*). In South America, it winters to Trinidad and has been recorded from northern Colombia and Brazil (Tefé, Amazonas) (Meyer de Schauensee 1982). It has not been recorded from the Pacific coast of South America.

On July 2, 1983, I noted a Ring-billed Gull on South Plaza Island in the Galapagos Archipelago of Ecuador. The bird was described to me by crew members of the M/V Santa Cruz who had

seen it on previous visits to that small island but were unfamiliar with the species. I located the bird in a small rain pool on the island in the company of a number of Lava Gulls (*Larus fuliginosus*). It appeared to be healthy, but was somewhat shy than the other gulls and did not allow a close approach.

Size was typical for Ring-billed Gull and the bird appeared to be in second-summer plumage. The head and underparts were clean white, as was the neck. The mantle and scapulars were pale gray and the tail had a few vague spots along what would have been a subterminal band earlier. The primaries were totally black, lacking even the tiny white tips of second-winter plumage. The iris was pale, the legs were dull yellow and the subterminal black band was well developed on a yellow bill. The bird also had the typical long-legged look of a Ring-billed Gull.

This species is not known from mainland Ecuador and has never before been recorded from the Galapagos Islands (Butler 1979). South Plaza Island lies off the east coast of Santa Cruz Island. It is a flat, gently tilted lava-fault block island of very small size. A red succulent, *Sesuvium*, grows in low patches at the eastern end of the island and the higher western half is covered

by an uneven growth of thick, thorny, scrubby bushes and the cactus *Opuntia echios*. Other birds on South Plaza Island include Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*), Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*), Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*), Swallow-tailed Gull (*Creagrus furcatus*), and three species of Darwin's finches (*Geospiza* sp.). The California Sea Lion (*Zalophus californianus*), and the Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*) are the other major vertebrates on this island.

LITERATURE CITED

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