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1701 LENOX, NORMAN, OK 73069 (JAG), 518 VAN BUREN AVENUE NW, PIEDMONT, OK 73078 (FMK), 505 EAST KERR, MIDWEST CITY, OKLAHOMA 73110 (VB), AND 518 WEST LOCKHEED DRIVE, MIDWEST CITY, OKLAHOMA 73110 (JF). 14 OCTOBER 1992.

## COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL AND LITTLE GULL IN OKLAHOMA

BY JAMES H. WITHGOTT

From 1 February to 5 April 1992, numerous observers viewed and photographed two Common Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*) and at least two (possibly three) Little Gulls (*L. minutus*) at three different reservoirs in Oklahoma. Both species are very rarely encountered in the state.

The Common Black-headed Gull has bred in Newfoundland in recent years and winter records are increasing in frequency throughout North America (Grant, P.J., 1986, Gulls, a guide to identification, Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota, p. 30). Since 1982, there have been nine reports for the Common Black-headed Gull in the four-state region of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri. Six of these were since 1990 (*Am. Birds* 1982-1992). For Oklahoma, there are two previous but not wholly acceptable records, both from the Great Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Alfalfa County, northwestern Oklahoma. On 1 January 1947, a single bird was reported by Seth H. Lowe which George M. Sutton, after studying details of the record, believed to have been a Franklin's Gull (*L. pipixcan*) identified earlier there that had retained its breeding plumage. An immature bird with head "a mixture of white and brownish" was photographed at the refuge on 8 April 1966 by Howard W. and Dottie Goard, but the picture is not in focus and the legs are light (Sutton, [1982], Sutton summaries of bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman).

At 0950 on 1 February 1992, as I was preparing to leave the Fort Gibson Reservoir Dam in Cherokee County, Oklahoma, the warning horn blasted and water began

pouring through the floodgates. Soon a flock of about 40 Bonapartes' Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) which had been resting on a sandbar downriver approached and began foraging over the turbulent waters below the dam. Scanning through the circling flock with binoculars, I saw a flash of darkness beneath the primaries of one bird. Upon closer scrutiny, I could discern the distinctive black-and-white underwing pattern of the primaries: dark except for a white leading edge. This, plus the bird's slightly larger size and deeper wingbeats convinced me that it was an adult Common Black-headed Gull in basic plumage.

From an average distance of 50 or 60 m, I watched the bird for an hour as it alternately flew about and stood on a sandbar in company with the abundant Bonapartes' Gulls. I noted its red legs, dark red bill (longer than the Bonaparte's nearby), and its neck, which was heavier than that of the others.

I notified Jeri McMahon of nearby Fort Gibson, who, together with Jerry Hird, located the gull that afternoon. A number of observers saw and photographed it next day, including Don Verser, James C. Hoffman and Melinda Droege, but it was not seen thereafter. Verser's pictures are filed with the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee (OBRC).

Near the Lake Tenkiller dam in Sequoyah County, approximately 22 miles to the southeast, James M. Hoffman discovered what he believed to be another Common Black-headed Gull on 21 February. Unlike the Fort Gibson bird, it showed a strongly developed hood, as this species in winter sometimes does. It is improbable that a gull would develop a hood in only 20 days, and Hoffman, who saw both birds, also noticed a difference in bill colors. Many other bird enthusiasts were privileged to see this strange gull on 21 and 22 February as it foraged with up to 1,500 Bonaparte's Gulls near the dam. An identifiable picture taken by Don Verser was submitted to the OBRC. On both days, the Common Black-headed Gull was accompanied by a Little Gull in adult basic plumage, and both were studied at distances of less than 10 m.

The Little Gull is another extralimital visitor to Oklahoma and was first documented in the state (photograph) at Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City, central Oklahoma, where one remained from 1 to 11 December 1990 (Newell, J.G., 1991, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 24:17-18). On 21 February 1992, James C. Hoffman discovered an adult Little Gull at Tenkiller Lake, oddly enough, on the very day that he found the Common Black-headed Gull alluded to above. This Little Gull showed a noticeable pink blush on the undersides, and exhibited a particularly dark crown. It, too, was recorded by numerous persons the next day and captured on film by Don Verser (OBRC records).

On 29 February 1992, I happened upon what was possibly another Little Gull circling over Fort Gibson Reservoir with hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls. Never seen closer than about 200 m, it could not be relocated after five minutes of observation, a not surprising fact considering the 1500 or so Bonaparte's Gulls with which it was commingling. The Little Gull's smaller size and solid dark underwings stood out sharply. Also noted were the rounded shape of the wingtips and the gray upperwings lacking white primaries. I concluded that this bird was at least in its second year, possibly an adult (see Grant 1986, op. cit., pp. 120-121). The last time it was seen was on 4 March, by Dan King and Steve Metz. Due to the close proximity of the two lakes, there is a possibility that Hoffman and I saw the same bird.

Still another Little Gull was found in Oklahoma during this six-week period. In the southcentral part of the state, Jeff D. Webster took photos of one (adult?) at the Denison

Dam on Lake Texoma in Marshall County on 5 April 1992 (OBRC records).

As a breeding species in North America, the Little Gull was first officially recorded in 1962 in the Great Lakes region. Since then, there has been a "general increase in sight records in eastern North America" (Grant 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 119). In the four-state region mentioned above, the Little Gull has been recorded 17 times since 1985; 11 of these sightings have occurred since 1990 (*Am. Birds* 1985-1992).

Whether or not this recent spate of sightings of both species is actually due to rising North American populations, to greater numbers of gulls wintering on reservoirs in the interior United States, or simply to more intensive scrutiny by bird students is not known. Further investigation is warranted.

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## GENERAL NOTES

**Another Inca Dove in Comanche County, Oklahoma.**—At approximately 1000 on 8 December 1991 (skies cloudy, temperature about 50°F), we noticed a small scaly dove that was perched quietly in an ash tree in our backyard in northeast Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma. It was watching several other birds feeding on the ground. When it flew down to join them after several minutes, its rufous distal underwings and longish tail with white outer feathers were obvious. We recognized it immediately as an Inca Dove (*Scardafella inca*) because we had encountered this species on several trips to south Texas. The dove remained on the ground only a moment before flying away to the west.

On 26 January it returned to the yard and we took several photographs, the best of which are on file in the Cameron University Museum of Zoology in Lawton. The last date on which we saw the little dove was 16 February.

This represents only the second record for Comanche County and the eleventh for the state. The first Comanche County sighting was reported by Eugene A. Bartnicki from the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge near Cache, where one bird was observed from mid-summer to 20 December 1977 (Bartnicki, E.A., 1979, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 12:31-32).

Other Oklahoma counties in which *Scardafella inca* has been recorded are Cimarron, Harper, Kay, Oklahoma, Cleveland, Jackson (Sutton, G.M., 1974, *A check-list of Oklahoma birds*, Contrib. No. 1, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 20), Caddo (Felis, C.A., 1976, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 9:33-34), Stephens (1982, *Am. Birds* 36:654) and Woodward (Engleman, J., 1980, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 13:12-13) counties.—Kurt A. Meisenzahl and Sharon Meisenzahl, 911 NE Bobwhite Rd., Lawton, Oklahoma 73507, 15 January 1991.

**Northern Oriole in Payne County, Oklahoma, during winter.**—On 7 January 1986, while visiting my aunt at her farm approximately 6 miles southeast of Stillwater in Payne County, Oklahoma, my son Brian and I saw a Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*). The house is surrounded by cropland, but in the well-landscaped yard various trees and shrubs are interspersed with numerous flower beds. My aunt maintains several bird feeders stocked with Black Russian sunflower seeds as well as two suet feeders.