

BLACK-TAILED GULL IN SOUTHERN MANITOBA

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On 2 June 1987, from 1410 to 1430 h, I observed a dark-mantled gull, which I subsequently concluded was a Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*), on Lake Winnipegosis, Manitoba. This is apparently the first Canadian record.

Lake Winnipegosis is a large, shallow body of water noted for its numerous islands and rock reefs, which support several large nesting colonies of waterbirds.⁵ During the summer of 1987, I was aboard a fishing vessel which visited a colony of American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants on Lake Winnipegosis as part of a government study on colonial waterbirds in southern Manitoba. During one of the survey trips a Black-tailed Gull was near Coleman Island, Sagemace Bay, Lake Winnipegosis, (52°00'N, 99°50'W).

When first seen, the bird was resting on a California, Herring and Ring-billed Gull on an exposed reef at the north end of Coleman Island. It was conspicuous from a considerable distance because its dark mantle contrasted with its white head and body; I initially thought that it was an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. This idea was dispelled as the boat passed the reef. The flock took flight, and started to follow the boat; the gull showed a strikingly obvious black tail band once it was airborne. Field notes were taken and a sketch drawn during the 15 minutes that the bird followed the boat, after which the gull flew back toward Coleman Island. The bird was watched through 10x40 binoculars at a distance of 50 m while it was on land, and down to 10 m while in flight. Weather conditions were excellent and visibility and the water was calm.

The gull was the size of the California Gulls, distinctly smaller than Herring and distinctly larger than Ring-billed Gulls, with which it was associating. The head and underparts were white; the mantle and upper wings were slate gray with a conspicuous white trailing edge to the secondaries; the primaries were black with no visible white spots at their tips; the underwing was noticeably gray apart from the black outer primaries; the rump and tail were white with a conspicuous solid black subterminal band and a thin white terminal band. The legs were yellowish, the bill was yellow with a prominent dark tip. The eye appeared dark; it is shown as yellow in adult Black-tailed Gull in Harrison.⁴ When in flight, it was a more elegant, graceful gull than either Herring or California gulls; this impression is probably due to the proportionately longer wings of the Black-tailed Gull.⁴ I did not initially identify the bird, and it was not until I had looked in several bird books and chatted with birders (especially Peter Grant) that I concluded that the bird was indeed a Black-tailed Gull. The individual most closely resembled the photographs of Black-tailed Gulls in *American Birds* (p. 1006), and in Grant (p. 263, with Herring Gull).¹⁻³ Other birders were alerted of its presence, but subsequent searches of Sagemace Bay and Lake Winnipegosis failed to relocate the bird.

In North America, Black-tailed Gulls have been reported from the western Aleutians, from southern California and from Maryland.²⁻⁶ The species nests along the coasts of the Sea of Japan, and disperses north to Sakhalin during the post-breeding season, hence the western Aleutian records are perhaps not too

surprising. If the occasional Black-tailed Gull wanders to the west coast of North America, then the bird on Lake Winnipegosis may have joined California Gulls (which breed in western Manitoba and spend the winter on the west coast) and migrated with them to breeding grounds in the interior of the continent.

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¹ ARMISTEAD, H.T. 1984. Middle Atlantic Coast region. *American Birds* 38:1005-1008.

² FARRAND, J. Jr. (Ed.) 1983. Audubon Society master guide to birds. Knopf, New York.

³ GRANT, P.J. 1986. Gulls: a guide to identification. 2nd. Ed. T & A D Poyser, Calton.

⁴ HARRISON, P. 1983. Seabirds: a field identification guide. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

⁵ KNAPTON, R.W. 1987. Lake Winnipegosis Colonial Waterbird Study. Special Report, Dept. Nat. Res., Winnipeg, Manitoba. 21 pp.

⁶ PETERSON, R.T. 1969. A field guide to western birds. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.



Great Horned Owl female captured at nest

Hardy et al.