

LAUGHING GULL IN REGINA

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On 19 May 1989 at about 11:00 a.m., I was walking along the eastern side of Wascana Lake just south of Willow Island. I looked westward when a flock of about 20 Franklin's Gulls flew down the channel east of the island towards me. They were wheeling and diving all over the water, evidently feeding on flying insects. I got my binoculars on them as they came by and noticed a laggard flying behind them, also feeding on the wing. The flock swung westward across the lake, but the loner behind them flew low at about eye level (the bank where I stood is quite a bit higher than the water surface) and about 15 m away. I had an excellent view of the black head and the gray mantle with dark wing ends. There was no trace of white in them. To clinch matters, as the bird came by, the upstroke of its wings clearly revealed that the primaries were all dark, not just the tips as in the Franklin's Gull.¹ As it hovered in the air pursuing insects, I saw the underwing pattern often. There is no doubt that it was a Laughing Gull and, I believe, a first record for Regina. *Editor's note: second for Saskatchewan: one, July 1975, Chaplin Lake, by (B.O. Savile).*

It flew westward after the Franklin's and that was the last I saw of it. I searched eastward along Wascana Lake as far as the eastern edge (about 1.75 km away) but could not find the flock again.

However, on the morning of 26 May, on the southern side of Wascana Lake, I saw another but smaller flock of Franklin's Gulls, performing much as the earlier one had done. Again, I thought they were feeding on flying insects. They were fairly low, but a little higher up I noticed a loner, a gull which, when seen through binoculars, had dark wing ends without any trace of white. When it dived low and wheeled I could see the gray mantle and dark primaries with no white. As it was so close to the other gulls this time I could see it was about the same size. Actually, the species is 5 cm longer than the Franklin's Gull. This bird was also a Laughing Gull, but whether it was the same one I had seen on 19 May I could not tell.

¹SCOTT, S. L. 1987. Field guide to the birds of North America. National Geog. Soc., Washington. 464 pp.