

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*



Folk Name: (none)

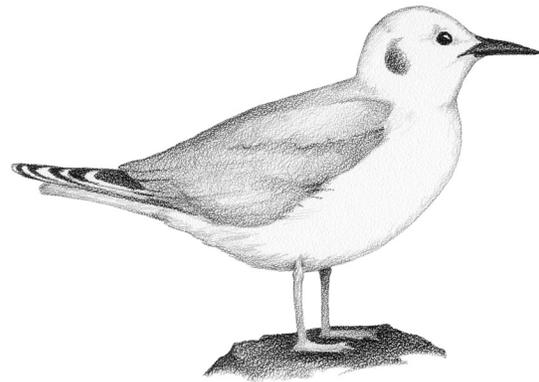
Status: Migrant, Winter Resident

Abundance: Fairly common

Habitat: Open water of lakes and rivers

Both the Bonaparte's Gull and the Sabine's Gull have been described as "tern-like." The Bonaparte's has a slim shape, long pointed wings, and also a "tern-like" behavior in flight. At 13 ½ inches, it is the smallest of the three gulls that regularly occur in this region. Taxonomically, it is closely related to the rare Black-headed Gull described below. It has a black hood in breeding plumage, but in winter it retains only a black "dot" or smudge, a bit behind the eye. This gull has a black bill.

Flocks ranging in size from 2 to 300 birds or more can be found along the Catawba River corridor and the Yadkin-Pee Dee corridor beginning in October and continuing through April. The latter birds are usually seen in breeding plumage. Our highest counts are 465 birds seen on Lake Norman and over 400 estimated on Blewett Falls Lake. Five lingering birds were counted on Badin Lake on the late date of April 29, 1972. One out of season bird has been reported. Larry Crawford reported finding a lone Bonaparte's Gull on High Rock Lake in Davidson County on August 8, 1948. He described his sighting as "quite unusual." Other than this historic report, we currently have no records of Bonaparte's Gull in the Central Carolina region from May through September. However, this gull has been reported a handful of times in the eastern Piedmont in both early May and in late September.



Bonaparte's Gull over Lake Norman. (Jeff Lemons)