

## Little Gull at Roanoke Rapids, N. C.

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On 29 August 1971 between 7:00 and 9:00 AM, I was able to study very carefully and leisurely a Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) at Roanoke Rapids Lake at Roanoke Rapids, N.C. I studied the gull with 7x50 binoculars in flight within 50 ft. of me and perched on a stake about 200 ft. from shore. The morning was bright and clear and light conditions were perfect with the sun at my back.

In flight, the gull's wings appeared dark gray on both upper and lower surfaces. The underside of its primaries were conspicuously darker than the wing lining and secondaries. The uniform dark wings without any white markings immediately separated it from either the Bonaparte's or Black-Headed Gull. Its back feathers were an unbarred brownish, a peculiar mark that I could not find pictured in any of the field guides. It was probably a sub-adult. Its fan-shaped tail was a lighter gray than the wings.

The most conclusive evidence was the gull's distinct head markings, seen very well in flight at close range. There was a distinct black spot just behind the eye. Above this spot was a black patch that extended across the back of the head behind the eye. Its black bill was small and slender. The head was almost identical to the one pictured in Robbins et alii's *Birds of North America*. No other small gull has this head pattern. These field marks were checked and rechecked many times as the bird flew by.

The extremely small size of this gull thoroughly convinced me of the identification. A comparison was made when it flew directly over a Pied-billed Grebe; it appeared slightly shorter lengthwise than the grebe. It appeared much like a very dark tern in flight.

This observation was made only two days after the passage of tropical storm Doria up the North Carolina coast. There is good reason to believe that this gull's appearance could have been related to the storm since it is a well known fact that hurricanes regularly blow pelagic species off course. Realizing this was an extremely rare sighting, I contacted Dr. and Mrs. Robert P. Teulings and Harry and Edmund LeGrand. They came to Roanoke Rapids on the day of the sighting and we searched for the gull without success.

I have not been able to find it since.

[Dept. Ed.—This appears to be the first record of this European gull in North Carolina. It is a rare but regular straggler along the East Coast north of North Carolina. On the basis of this observation, the Little Gull can be placed on the hypothetical list for North Carolina. See 1971 Christmas count reports in *The Chat* for a second observation in North Carolina and *American Birds* for observations in southeastern Virginia.]

## Early Records for Pelagic Birds Off the North Carolina Coast

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1 August 1969

On Friday and Saturday, 26 and 27 April 1969, I was on the R.V. *Eastward*, Duke University's oceanographic research vessel, SE of Cape Lookout, N.C. I maintained a continuous watch for birds all day Friday and on Saturday from dawn to 07:30 with 8x40 binoculars and, whenever possible, with a 20x60 spotting scope.

Numerous Laughing Gulls and a few Herring Gulls were within 25 miles of shore. All pelagic birds were beyond 50 miles from shore. These observations are listed below in chronological order.