

## 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.

*Friday, 26 April 1969*

16:30—1 Wilson's Petrel. 34 degrees 03' N, 76 degrees 05' W, 51 miles offshore.

18:00—1 Audubon's Shearwater: small black and white shearwater with rapidly beating wings. Came to within 120 yards of ship. 34 degrees 05.7' N, 76 degrees 00.8' W, 51 miles offshore.

*Saturday, 27 April 1969*

06:30—1 Greater Shearwater and 1 unidentified shearwater. 33 degrees 51' N, 75 degrees 46' W, 65 miles offshore.

07:30—1 Greater Shearwater; 3 unidentified shearwaters; 8 Wilson's Petrels. The petrels seemed to be following a "white-tipped" shark when first seen. The petrels followed the ship for a short while, apparently trying to feed on ham thrown overboard as bait for the shark. All were seen within a mile of 06:30 position.

Shearwaters listed as "unidentified" were large, probably either Greater or Sooty, but they were too far away for identification.

I am familiar with both Greater Shearwater and Wilson's Petrel from boat trips off Long Island and in the Bay of Fundy. Although this sighting of Audubon's Shearwater was my first one, the bird definitely was not a Greater Shearwater as it lacked the whitish rump, larger size, and more leisurely wingbeat of that species. Moreover, its wingbeat was faster than that of the Manx Shearwater (which I have seen once in company with more experienced observers); the process of elimination combined with the area in which I saw the bird (Gulf Stream) makes me reasonably certain it was, indeed, an early Audubon's Shearwater. For a full discussion of the field identification of "black and white shearwaters" see Peter Post's "The Occurrence and Field Identification of Small 'Black and White Shearwaters' in New York" in *The Kingbird*, 14:133-140, 1964.

The sighting of these birds was very early. *Birds of North Carolina* (Pearson, Brimley and Brimley, 1942) gives the following early dates: Audubon's Shearwater, 6 July; Greater Shearwater, 22 June; and Wilson's Petrel, 27 May.

There are, however, earlier records for the Greater Shearwater on 1 May 1965 off Long Island, New York. (*Audubon Field Notes*, 19:455) and 21 April 1911 in Massachusetts, (*The Birds of Cape Cod, Mass.*, 1965). Palmer in *The Handbook of North American Birds* (1962) states that occasional Greater Shearwaters are found in the north Atlantic in June, and that the Wilson's Petrel reaches 30 degrees N latitude by the third week of April on the ocean, and only later moves inshore. There is also a record of Wilson's Petrel on 20 May 1967 at Ocean City, Maryland (*Audubon Field Notes*, 21:493).

From the above records it is clear that my observations of the Wilson's Petrel and Greater Shearwater are not unprecedented. Indeed, it would seem that such early occurrence, for the petrel at least, is probably standard. In any event, these records for all three species are the earliest known for North Carolina.

[Dept. Ed.—Records of pelagic birds off the North Carolina coast are very scarce, and the timing of occurrences of most species is based only on fragmentary local data coupled with somewhat better data on arrival and departure from the breeding areas. Thus, additional records such as the above are always valuable.]

## **Breeding Range Extension Of the Blue-winged Teal into Southeastern North Carolina**

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11 July 1970

The southernmost breeding site of the Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors orphna*) along the Atlantic coast is given as northeastern North Carolina (Pea and Bodie Islands) by the