

Iceland Gull at Mt. Pleasant, S.C.

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On 3 April 1977, LeGrand observed an immature white-winged gull on the extensive mudflats at the end of Pitt Street in Mt. Pleasant, Charleston County, S.C. With the help of a 30X scope, he immediately identified the bird as an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*). The gull was seen at midday near a small flock of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*). Several minutes later Gauthreaux arrived with the Clemson University ornithology class, and he concurred with LeGrand's identification. We observed the Iceland Gull for at least 30 minutes through Gauthreaux's 40X Questar scope. Light conditions were good, and the viewing distance was approximately 250 meters. Paul Hamel and John Cely, who were also with us, ventured out across the mudflats and observed the gull within 75 meters for 45 minutes with binoculars.

The Iceland Gull was quickly separated from the other gulls by its whitish plumage, appearing much paler than the other two species. It was intermediate in size between the Herring and Ring-billed gulls, but it had a more slender body than either. The clinching character was the bill—all dark and stubby, scarcely two-thirds the length of the Herring Gull's bill. The folded wings extended nearly 5 cm beyond the tail, though we feel that this field mark is not a great aid in identification. The gull was also observed in flight as it moved from one spot to another on the flats. The overall whitish plumage, with the white primaries, was clearly noted. We are familiar with both the Glaucous (*L. hyperboreus*) and Iceland gulls, having seen immature Glaucous Gulls on several occasions and having observed an immature Iceland at Clemson, S.C., in February 1976 (see above). The Mt. Pleasant bird seemed identical to the Clemson bird except for the somewhat whiter overall plumage of the former bird. Hamel and Cely noted that the Iceland, because of its small bill, had difficulty in swallowing certain food items that nearby Herring Gulls had no trouble in swallowing. Though neither had seen Glaucous or Iceland Gulls before, they are convinced that the white-winged gull was an Iceland.

Separation of the Iceland and Glaucous Gulls in the field is not an easy task. Hume (British Birds 68:24-37) has summarized the similarities and differences between the two species. Recently there has been considerable controversy in the Carolinas over the field identification of the Iceland Gull (see LeGrand, Am. Birds 31:321). We believe that part of the problem has been the inaccurate descriptions of field marks and the inadequacy of plumage illustrations in various field guides. The major guides say that the Iceland has a *slender* bill; however, the two Icelands that we have seen had bills that were noticeably *short*, giving the bill a *stubby* (not slender) and somewhat dove-like appearance. The all-dark bill also rules out the Glaucous, which always has the basal two-thirds of its bill yellow or flesh in color. The stubby bill, in our opinion, also helps distinguish the Iceland from the immature Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*), which has a bill similar in shape to those of the Ring-billed and Herring [based on photographs in Am. Birds 29 (6), front cover and p. 1065, and in The Birds of California, Arnold Small, p. 165]. Despite our failure to collect or photograph the bird, as neither a gun nor a camera was available, we remain fully convinced of our sighting.

Glaucous Gull on Pawleys Island, S.C.

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On 23 January 1977 we were birding on Pawleys Island, Georgetown County, S.C., when I saw a very pale gull about a mile to the north resting on a sandbar. The time was

late afternoon; skies were clear and there was plenty of light available.

We hastened up the beach and eventually got to within 100 yards of the bird. Using the 80X Questar telescope, we were certain that the bird was either an Iceland or Glaucous Gull (*Larus glaucoides* or *L. hyperboreus*). We saw a large gull with entirely white plumage, except for a small, pale gray portion of the mantle and the folded wings. The total gray area was less than one would expect on an adult Glaucous or Iceland. The bill was pale yellow, except for the front one-fourth of its length, which was black. We believe that the bird was a Glaucous rather than an Iceland for two reasons. In the first case, this was a large, husky bird. It was slightly larger than most of the nearby Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), but at least one of the Herring Gulls was equal in size. All the nearby Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) were dwarfed by it. Second, the bill was at least as large in proportion to the head as that of any of the Herring Gulls. In all of the Iceland Gulls that we have seen to date (in New York and Massachusetts), we have been impressed by the small size of the bill. Size and plumage indicate that our bird was a second or third year female Glaucous Gull.

Sprunt and Chamberlain consider the Glaucous Gull to be a casual winter visitor (South Carolina Bird Life, 1970, p. 259). They list six records, and Burton adds two more in the Supplement. A more recent record is that of a bird seen on the Litchfield-Pawleys Island Christmas Count of 1974 (Chat 39:10). Records in North Carolina are more frequent. See especially the report for the Southern Atlantic Coast region in *American Birds* (30:705), which describes the heavy influx of white-winged gulls in the Carolinas during the winter of 1975-76.

Willow Flycatcher in Spring on South Carolina Coast

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On 28 April 1977, we saw a small *Empidonax* flycatcher at the edge of Mayrant's Backwater in I'On Swamp, about 20 miles NE Charleston, S.C. Because it sang its "fitz-bew" song repeatedly, Trochet, who is familiar with the species on its breeding ground in Maryland, immediately identified the bird as a Willow Flycatcher (*E. traillii*). As soon as convenient, we played the taped song for comparison and agreed that it could have been no other species.

Prior to 1973, the Willow Flycatcher and the Alder Flycatcher (*E. alnorum*) were considered as subspecies of a single species, Traill's Flycatcher (*E. traillii*). In that year, the American Ornithologists' Union elevated them to the status of species, principally on the basis of song, that of the Willow being rendered as "fitz-bew," that of the Alder as "fee-bee-o" (Auk 90:415-416). The Willow Flycatcher is generally the more western and southern in distribution; the Alder is more northern, its breeding range including New England.

Early in this century, Arthur T. Wayne (*Birds of South Carolina*, 1910, p. 103-104) recorded Traill's Flycatcher on the coast between 15 August and 30 September. He did not note the song, but collected specimens which he assigned to the subspecies *E. t. alnorum*. The Traill's Flycatcher report on the Aiken, S.C., Spring Bird Count, 2 May 1961, was not collected, nor was its song described (Chat 25:52). Another bird, recovered by Norris (1963, Contributions from the Charleston Museum, 14:31) from the base of a TV tower near Aiken, was identified only as Traill's Flycatcher (*E. traillii*). Happily, the Willow Flycatcher seen on 21 May 1974 near Marietta, Greenville County, S.C., by LeGrand was singing, and its identity is certain (Chat 38:80).

The Willow Flycatcher has not yet been found breeding in South Carolina. Nests of this species are known from two localities in North Carolina (Chat 37:24).