

## First South Carolina Sight Record of the Lesser Black-backed Gull

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On 16 September 1976, I observed a single adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) on a sanitary landfill near Spruill Avenue, Charleston Heights, Charleston County, S.C. The bird was feeding in association with Laughing Gulls (*L. atricilla*), Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*), and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*). I approached to within 30 m of the bird and observed it in good light with 7 x 35 wide-angle binoculars from 1530 to 1600 hours. It was slightly smaller than a Herring Gull and had a sooty-black back similar to that of an adult Great Black-backed Gull (*L. marinus*). The bill and legs were bright yellow, and there was red spot on the upper mandible. When the gull flew, it dangled its legs downward revealing their bright yellow color.

I left the landfill and returned at 1635 hours prepared to collect the bird. However, as I stepped onto the site, it and all of the other birds left and did not return. On 17 September, Pete Laurie and I independently searched all landfills in the Charleston area (see Chat 37:57-62 for details of geographic locations), but we failed to find the bird again.

This observation is the first record of the Lesser Black-backed for South Carolina. Unfortunately, the photographs I took of the bird were inadequate for confirmation of the sight record (S.A. Gauthreaux Jr. and H.E. LeGrand Jr., pers. comm.). Consequently, this species must be placed on the hypothetical list until additional records are available.

The appearance of this species in South Carolina is not unexpected as it has been recorded regularly in winter since 1975 from North Carolina (Am. Birds 31:163-166) and Florida (Am. Birds 31:166-169). I predict that it will become a regular but rare winter visitor in the future, just as the Great Black-backed Gull has become since the 1950s (South Carolina Bird Life, 1970, p. 604).

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## Owl Census at Columbia, S.C.

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During the early months of 1978, Charles Whitney and I conducted an informal survey of owl populations within the area covered annually during the Columbia, S.C., Christmas Bird Count. Using taped calls and hooted imitations to attract the birds, we worked approximately 30% of the count circle during our survey. Our searching was done for the most part along quiet back roads and woods trails, away from residential areas, and was always begun shortly after dark on calm evenings. The results of our field work are shown in Table 1.