

# TEXAS GULLS OVERVIEW 2025



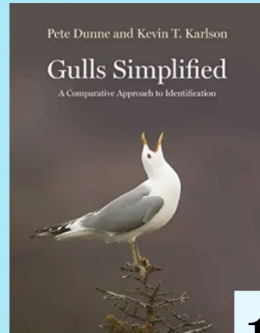
Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

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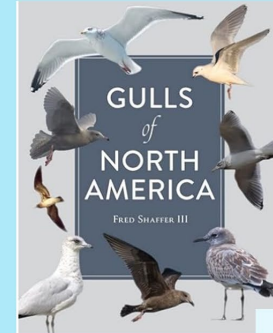
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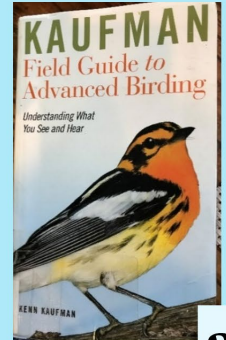
# REFERENCES



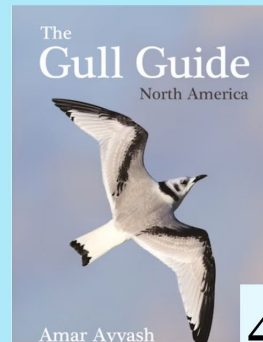
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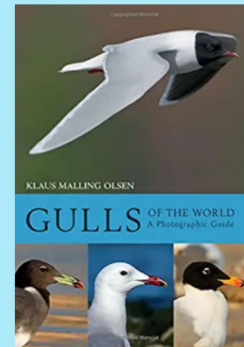
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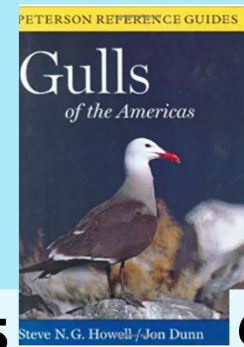
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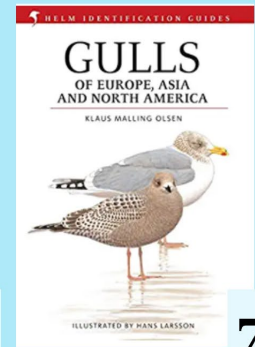
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5



6



7

- ▶ 1— a very good book and a very good place to start. Well organized, slightly simplified approach with excellent self-tests.
- ▶ 2— A good beginner's look at gulls.
- ▶ 3—Contains a great chapter on how to approach gull study.
- ▶ 4—A high level, well-organized approach to gulls.
- ▶ 5,6,7—Wealth of information, but not necessarily organized for quick assimilation.

# GULL LINKS

*Anything Laurus* Website (**Amar Ayyash**)  
<http://www.anythinglaurus.com/>

*Gull Identification* Website (**Steve Hampton**)  
<http://www.tertia.us/gulls/gulls.htm>

<http://gull-research.org>

Facebook Group: North American Gulls



# DISTRIBUTION

- ▶ The overwhelming majority of gulls in Texas will be from the Texas Hex group.
- ▶ Gulls wander widely, so the the Wandering 7 show up regularly, but sparsely in Texas.
- ▶ Rare gulls also do show up in Texas, but first think horses, not unicorns!!
- ▶ The distribution of over 99% of Texas gulls is summarized in “Jeff’s Texas Gule Rule” – so commit it to memory!!!!

# Gulls of the World

World ~61

North America (32+1)

Gulls of Texas (28+1)

## The Texas Hex

Bonaparte's  
Franklin's  
Herring  
Laughing  
Lesser Black-backed  
Ring-billed

6 (+1)

## Wandering Texans

Black-legged Kittiwake  
California  
Glaucous  
Iceland (kumlieni)  
Iceland (thayeri)  
Little  
Sabine's

3 Range Restricted  
Rarities

Ivory  
Red-legged Kittiwake  
Ross's

13 Lucky Texans

Heermann's  
Black-headed  
Black-tailed  
Glaucous-winged  
Gray  
Great Black-backed  
Kelp  
Short-billed  
Slaty-backed  
Vega Gull  
Western  
Yellow-footed  
Yellow-legged

6 North American  
Vagrants

Belcher's  
Common  
Gray-hooded  
Pallas's  
Swallow-tailed

28  
Additional  
species

# 28 (+1) NORTH AMERICAN GULLS

**FOCUS ON  
The Texas Hex**

**BE READY FOR  
6 (+1) Wandering  
Texans**

**BE AWARE OF  
The Lucky  
13 Texans**

**FURGIT ABOUT  
3 Range Restricted  
Rarities  
(far north)**

#	Species
1	Ring-billed
2	Laughing
3	Franklin's
4	Bonaparte's
5	Herring
6	Lesser Black-backed
7	Black-legged Kittiwake
8	California
9	Glaucous
10 (+1)	Iceland (thayeri) Iceland (kumlieni)
11	Little
12	Sabine's
13	Heermann's
14	Short-billed
15	Western
16	Yellow-footed
17	Glaucous-winged
18	Great Black-backed
19	Black-headed
20	Yellow-legged
21	Slaty-backed
22	Black-tailed
23	Vega Gull
24	Kelp
25	Gray
26	Ivory
27	Red-legged Kittiwake
28	Ross's

# SUGGESTED APPROACH TO GULLS: DIVE – IN!!!!

- ▶ **Distribution** – See Jeff's Texas Gulls Rule
- ▶ **Structure** – the size, body shape, bill & head shape, and wing length & shape are more important clues than plumage.
- ▶ **Plumage Details**—should not be ignored, but an identification should not be based on them alone.



Photo by Ian K Barker

		TEXAS SEASON		
		SUMMER	WINTER	MIGRATION
TEXAS LOCATION	COAST	Ring-billed	Rare	Common
		Herring	Rare	Common
		Laughing	Abundant	Abundant
		Bonaparte's		Uncommon
		Franklin's	Rare	Uncommon
		LBBG		Common
TEXAS LOCATION	INLAND	Ring-billed	Rare	Abundant
		Herring	Rare	Uncommon
		Laughing	Rare	Rare
		Bonaparte's		Common
		Franklin's	Rare	Uncommon
		LBBG		Uncommon

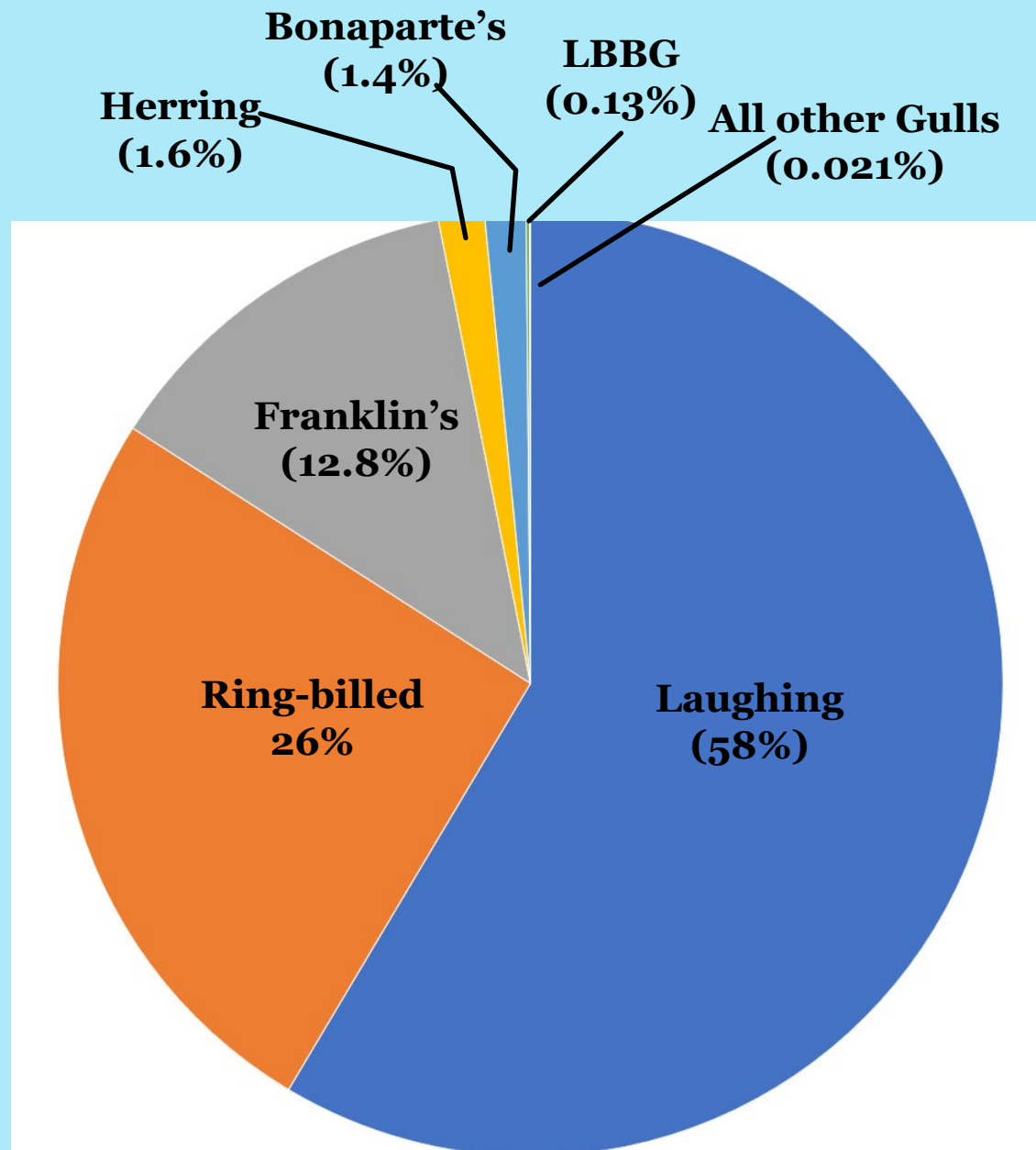
# THE TEXAS HEX DISTRIBUTION (JEFF'S TEXAS GULLS RULE)

Place this carefully  
in your head and  
**LEAVE IT THERE**  
**!!!**

## Jeff's Texas-Gull Rule

- 1) Coast year-round – think **Laughing** first
- 2) Inland in winter – think **Ring-billed** first
- 3) Migrating overhead – think **Franklin's** first
- 4) If it's a bigg-un – think **Herring** first
- 5) Black back – think LBBG first

**EBIRD DATA  
SUPPORTING  
JEFF'S TEXAS GULLS  
RULE**

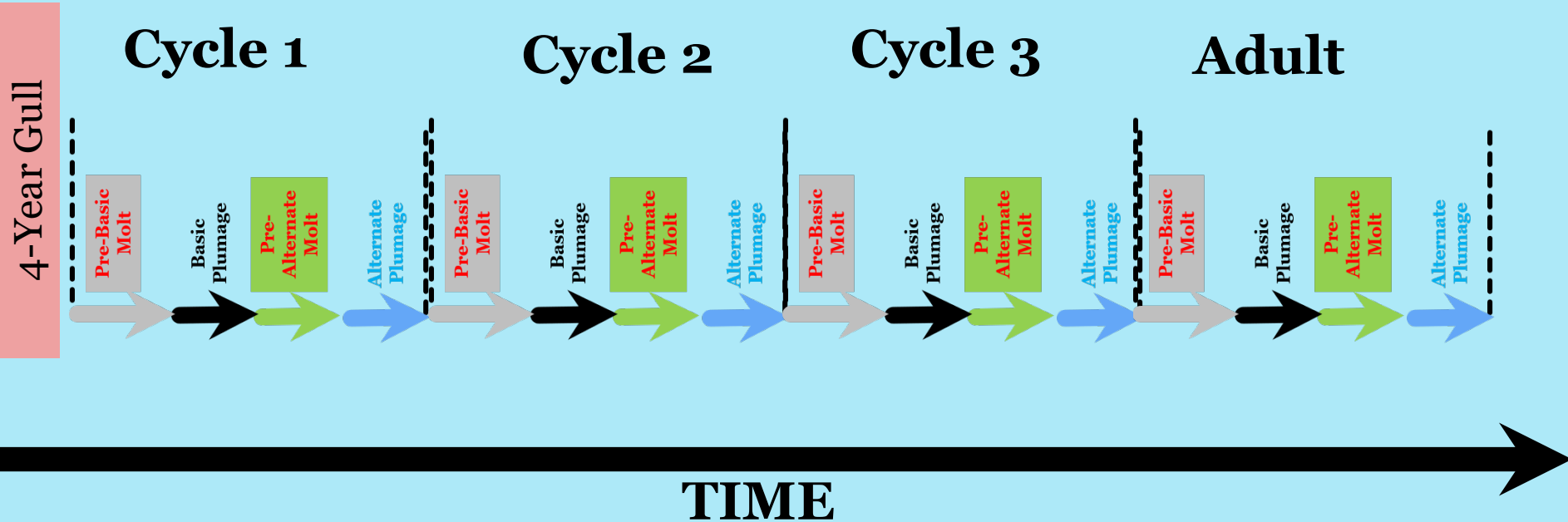


# AGING GULLS

- ▶ After distribution & size, determining the age of a gull is the next most important step.
- ▶ Small gulls take 2 or 3 years to reach maturity (including plumage). Large gulls (which is most species) take 4 years. So they are called: 2-year, 3-year or 4-year gulls.
- ▶ Gulls are traditionally aged as juvenile, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year & adult.
- ▶ The Gulls Simplified approach, which I recommend, uses 3 age classes – **Juvenile, Sub-adult, and Adult**.
- ▶ **Juvenile** plumage is characterized by brown feathers, and often white edged feathers, forming a scaley look. **Adult** plumage is the typical gull pattern of dark back and white underside. **Sub-adult** plumage is a mixture of these two.
- ▶ In addition to the overall plumage changes, typical aging characteristics include:
  - ▶ **Eye color** – dark changing to light (in most species).
  - ▶ **Bill color** – dark changing to adult shades. The change in color starts at the base of the bill and proceeds over time to the tip.
  - ▶ **Leg color** – yellow, blueish, grayish, blackish changing to adult colors often of pink or yellow.
  - ▶ **Mantle & scapular feathers** – the change to adult back color starts with these feathers, so look here on a juvenile bird for any hint of adult color.
  - ▶ **Wing coverts** – all feathers are replaced in the fall (**pre-basic molt**). Flight feathers are not replaced in the spring molt (**pre-alternate molt**). So the wear of the wing coverts is an important feature to note. Worn, slightly worn or any hint of brown can indicate a less-than fully adult bird.
  - ▶ **Pointed primary tips** – adults have more rounded primary tips. Juveniles are more pointy.

# GENERIC MOLT CYCLES OF ADULT GULLS

All the big white-headed gulls follow this schedule





# ***GULLS SIMPLIFIED*** APPROACH

(KARLSON & DUNNE)

## **3 AGE GROUPS**

### ▶ **Immature (or Juvenile)**

- ▶ Mostly brown or grayish brown
- ▶ Often a tail band
- ▶ Dark eye
- ▶ Dusky or dark bill

### ▶ **Sub-adult**

- ▶ Mix of immature & adult plumages
- ▶ Upper back –adult feathers begin
- ▶ Tail & wing – worn immature plumage
- ▶ Bill often transitioning in color

### ▶ **Adult**

- ▶ Upperparts – fully adult-gray, white, or black
- ▶ Underparts – white
- ▶ Leg, bill, eye – consistent with adult colors



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# JUVENILE

**Dark eye**

**Mostly brown or  
grayish-brown**

**Dark  
bill**

**Primary tips  
pointier**

**Often a tail-band**





# SUB-ADULT

Upper back – adult  
feathers begin

Bill & eye  
transitioning

Mix of  
immature &  
adult plumages

Worn immature  
coverts & tail  
(left over from first  
flight plumage)

# ADULT

**Legs, bill, eyes –  
adult colors**

**Upperparts – fully adult  
gray, white, black**

**Underparts – white**

**Primary tips  
rounder**



Juvenile



Photo by Bill Chambers

# Mantle & scapulars (Herring)

1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Photo by Brian Sullivan

3<sup>rd</sup> cycle



Photo by Michael Stubblefield

4<sup>th</sup> cycle +



Photo by Joe Wing

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



Photo by Blake Matheson

Juvenile



Photo by Bill Chambers

# Primary Tips (Herring)

1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Photo by Brian Sullivan

3<sup>rd</sup> cycle

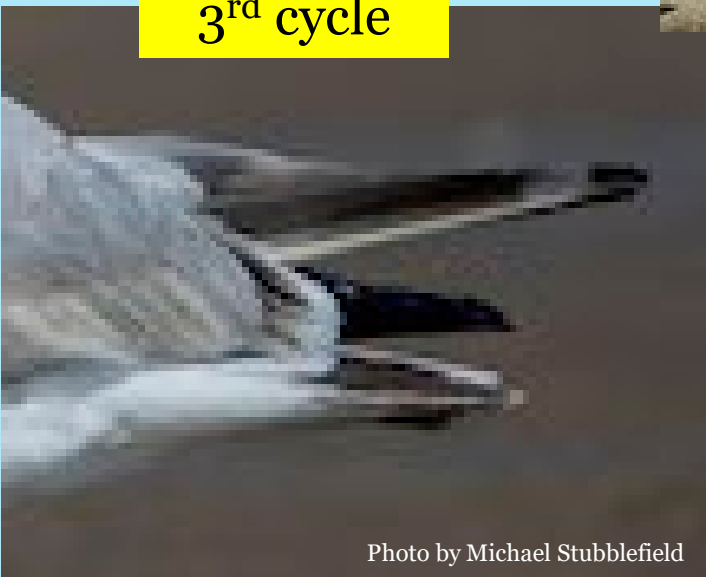


Photo by Michael Stubblefield

4<sup>th</sup> cycle +



Photo by Joe Wing

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



Photo by Blake Matheson



Juvenile

Photo by Bill Chambers

# BILL & EYE (Herring)



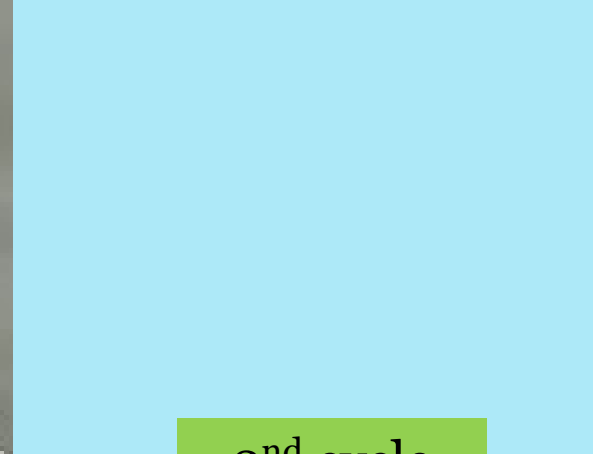
1<sup>st</sup> cycle

Photo by Brian Sullivan



4<sup>th</sup> cycle +

Photo by Joe Wing



2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



3<sup>rd</sup> cycle

Photo by Michael Stubblefield



Photo by Blake Matheson





Photo by Bill Chambers

Juvenile

Herring



Photo by Brian Sullivan

1<sup>st</sup> winter

1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Photo by Chris Wood

1<sup>st</sup> summer



Photo by Blake Matheson

2<sup>nd</sup> winter

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



Photo by Miguel Rodríguez Esteban

2<sup>nd</sup> summer



Photo by David McCorquodale

3<sup>rd</sup> winter

3<sup>rd</sup> cycle



Photo by Jim Stasz

Photo by Michael Stubblefield

3<sup>rd</sup> summer

4<sup>th</sup> cycle  
(adult)



Photo by Jim Stasz

4<sup>th</sup> winter



Photo by Joe Wing

4<sup>th</sup> summer



# SIZE

- ▶ As can be seen on the graph on the next page, the size of the 28 or so gull species regularly found in North America gradually increases from the smallest (**Little Gull**) to the largest (**Great-black-backed Gull**).
- ▶ Therefore, knowing the size of the Texas Hex, especially **Herring, Ring-billed & Laughing**, makes identifying less common species easier.
- ▶ One should initially scan a flock of gulls for known species, then try to pick out gulls of different sizes for further study.
- ▶ In gulls, females are typically smaller, have more rounded heads and are slightly longer- and pointier-winged. Plumage differences are negligible. However, it's usually considered safe to sex gulls only when they are in matched-up pairs which can be compared side-by-side.

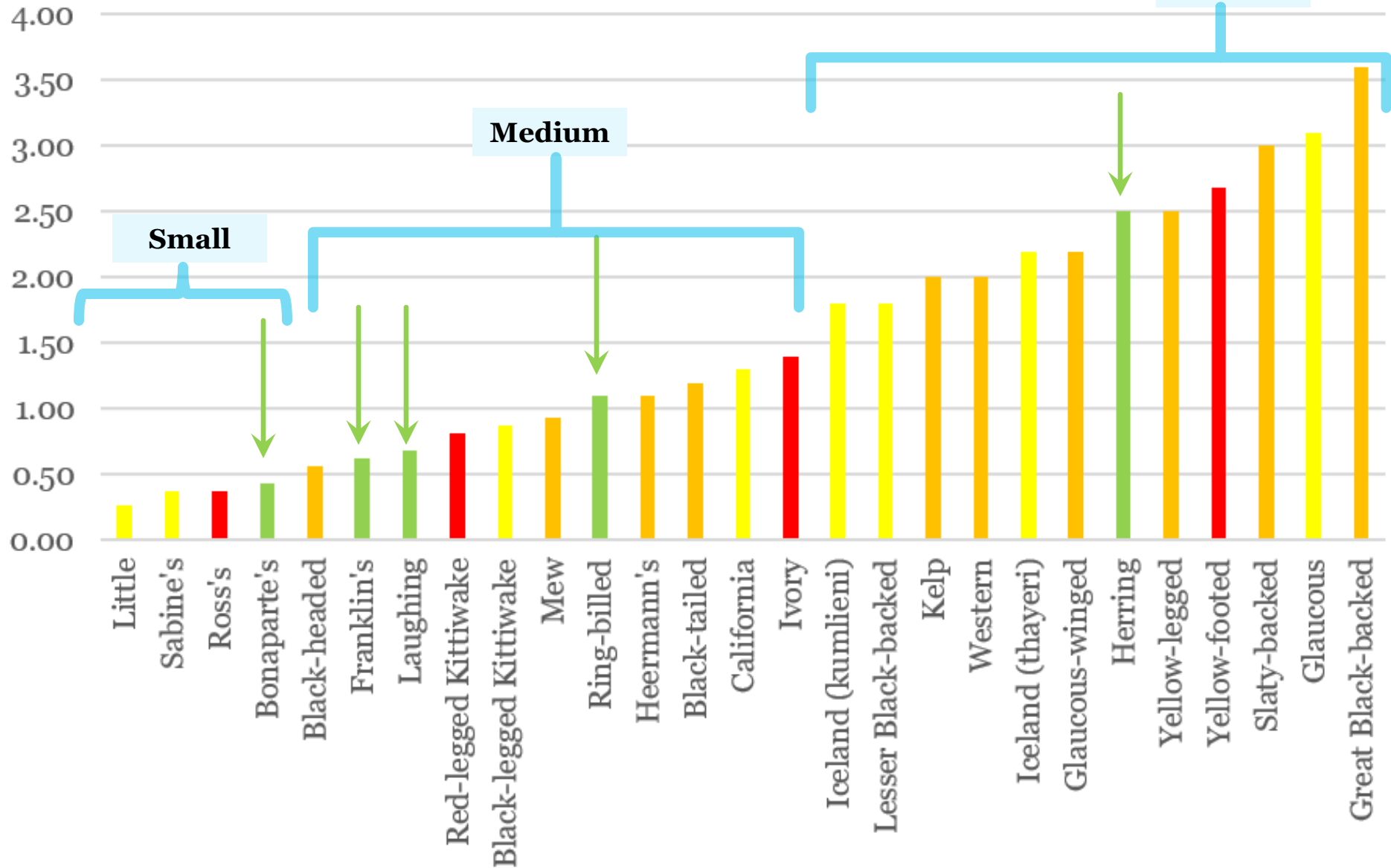
These are informal size groupings.

## North American Gulls WEIGHT (pounds)

Large

Medium

Small



# DIFFERENCES IN THE SEXES (HERRING)

Males (of larger gull species) – larger, broader, more rectangular heads, stouter bills.



Females – smaller, rounder heads, and often longer wings.



Experts usually say “probably”. Best determined with mated pair.

# PLUMAGE

- ▶ As mentioned, structure is the first place to begin an identification, but plumage cannot be ignored.
- ▶ However, the details of various plumages can be overwhelming for a novice gull watcher.

# PLUMAGE – COLOR & PATTERN

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### **Shade of Adult Gray**

Precise shade of gray. Consider lighting conditions & effects.

### **Condition of Feathers**

Examine feathers for wear & molt, especially wing coverts

### **Bill color & pattern**

Always worth noting, never diagnostic on its own, age & season dependent

### **Orbital ring color**

Exact color sometimes useful

### **Eye color**

Variable – never diagnostic, but always worth noting  
Iris dark in juveniles, paler with age (usually)

### **Leg color**

Varies with age & season  
Often significant in adults  
Never infallible  
Frequent cases of the “wrong leg color”  
Use to sort through flocks

### **Wings**

Adults – examine wing-tip colors, patterns and demarcation (sharp or gradual transition of colors)



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

## 26 NA Gulls by Back Color



Heerman's



Kelp



Great Black-backed



Lesser Black-backed



Yellow-footed



Western

### Dark-backed Gulls

### Medium-Dark-backed Gulls



Laughing



Black-tailed



Franklin's



Sabine's



Slaty-backed



Red-legged  
Kittiwake



Yellow-legged

### Medium-backed Gulls



Black-legged  
Kittiwake



Short-billed



Little



California



Bonaparte's



Iceland



Glaucous-winged

Paintings by David A. Sibley

### Pale-backed Gulls



Ring-billed



Herring



Black-headed



Ross's



Glaucous



Ivory



A photograph of two white wind turbines against a blue sky with scattered white and gray clouds. The turbine in the foreground is on the left, and the one in the background is to its right. Power lines are visible across the sky. The right side of the image has a light blue background with white text boxes.

# BE AWARE OF THE EFFECTS OF LIGHT

- Lighting affects.
  - Bright sun or shade (as in photo)
  - Angle of bird (darker from behind, lighter in front).
- Best when birds side by side.
- Close shades of gray can be indistinguishable.

# EFFECTS OF ANGLE OF LIGHT



These are both Forster's Terns, but at different angles to the sun in this non-composite photo.



# RING-BILLED

## \*\*REFERENCE BIRD\*\*

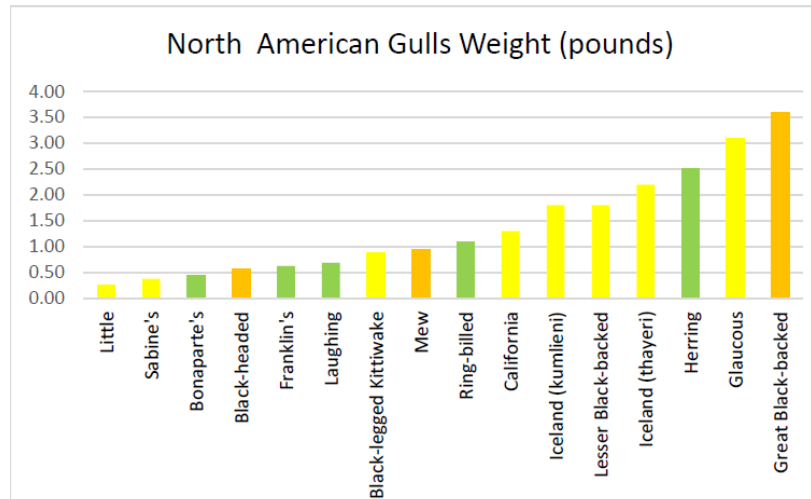
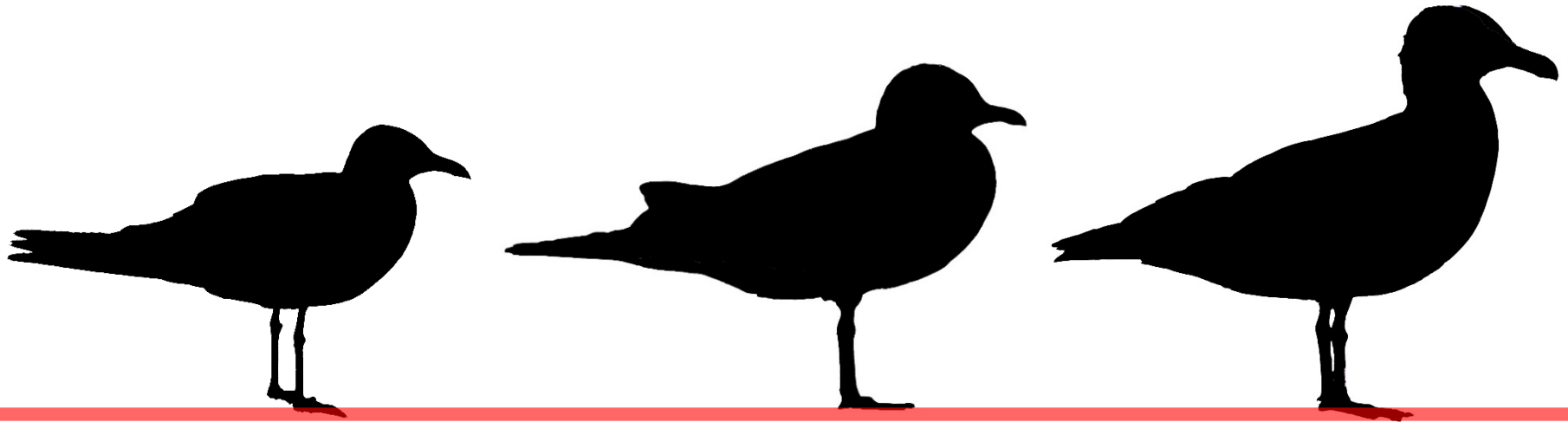
- ▶ Get to know the structure and plumages of **Ring-billed**.
- ▶ It is the most common gull inland during the winter gulling season and is also present on the coast in lower numbers.
- ▶ The **Ring-bill** represents the “standard gull” for many of the structural characteristics: size, build, leg position, bill length, etc. Therefore, think of the **Ring-billed** when comparing the structural characteristics of other gulls. Also use the Ring-billed (& Laughing on the coast to directly compare characteristics of unknown species).
- ▶ Length of wings is one exception to this rule: the **Ring-billed's** wings project slightly longer than average beyond the tail.
- ▶ Since gulls generally arrive in Texas in early November, and **Ring-billed** Juveniles have already transitioned to Sub-adults by this time, only 2 plumages of **Ring-billed** are expected in Texas during the gulling season. Though the Sub-adults are quite varied.
- ▶ Don't mistake the wings for the tail. As in shorebirds, be careful to note that the wings sit atop the tail in repose, and that they are generally longer than the tail in gulls.

# SIZE COMPARISON

**Laughing**

**Ring-billed**

**Herring**



# REFERENCE BIRD RING-BILLED GULL “THE STANDARD GULL”

Medium bill  
(thickness &  
length)

Average  
head size

Average build,  
balanced,  
well-proportioned

Proportionately  
slightly  
long-ish wings

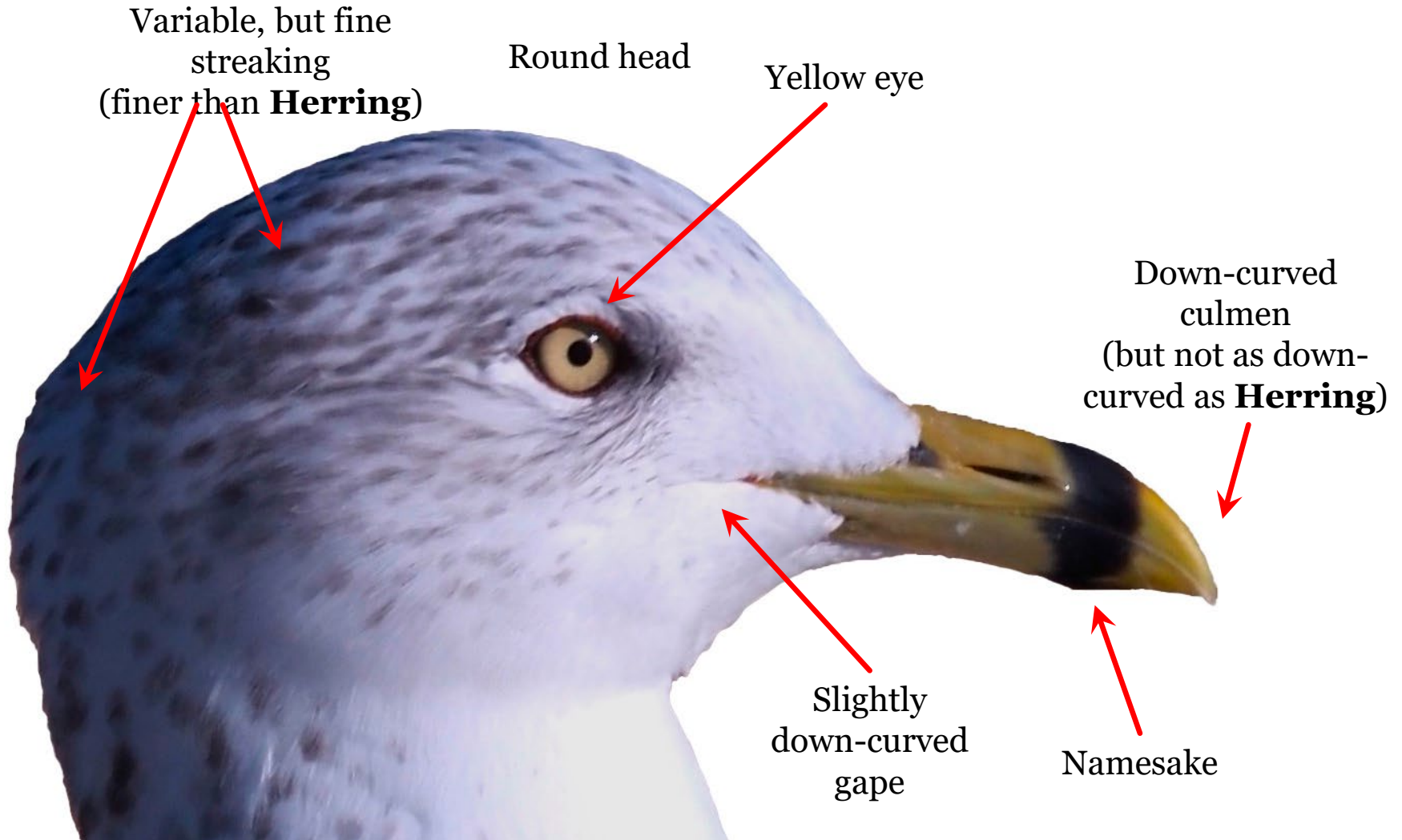
Chest & belly  
neither bulky  
nor lanky

Neither long  
nor short

Yellow legs  
Positioned in middle

# HEAD & BILL

## RING-BILLED – ADULT NONBREEDING





# AGING RING-BILLED A 3-YEAR GULL

## Immature



Photo by Daniel Jauvin

## Sub-adult



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

## Adult



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# LAUGHING

## \*\*REFERENCE BIRD\*\*

### GULF COAST

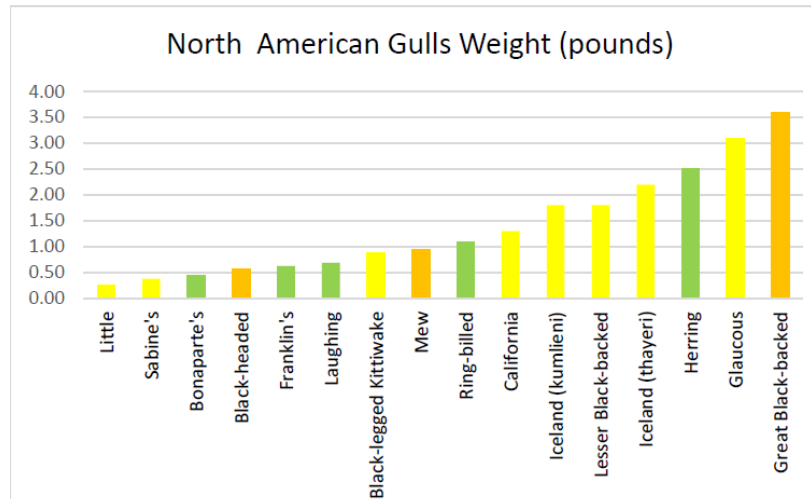
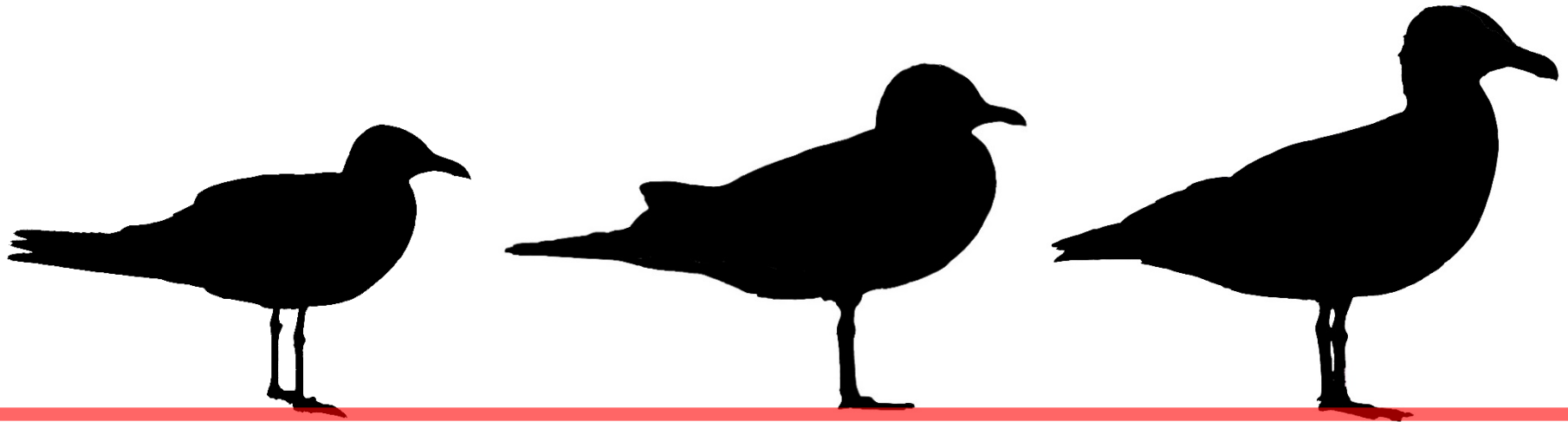
- ▶ **Laughing Gulls** are ubiquitous on the Gulf and East Coasts.
- ▶ They are characterized by their long, pointy wings with black outer undersides, long legs, small heads, and droopy black, or during the breeding season, red bills.
- ▶ The extensive black on the underside of the pointy wings gradually grades from black to gray to white towards the body.

# SIZE COMPARISON

**Laughing**

**Ring-billed**

**Herring**



# STRUCTURE

## LAUGHING ADULT BREEDING

Black hood

Broken  
white  
Eye-ring

Long, slender, droopy bill

Charcoal  
gray back

Wings extend  
well beyond  
tail

Pointed  
wing-tips

Gleaming  
white  
undersides

Black wingtips,  
inconspicuous  
to obvious  
white spots  
(variable)

Slender, tapered,  
long-winged profile

Long  
legged,  
lanky

Horizontal posture



# LAUGHING ADULT NON-BREEDING

Pointy tips

Long,  
slender  
wing



Fully white  
tail & rump

Extensive black with  
gradual transition to  
gray, then white

# FRANKLIN'S

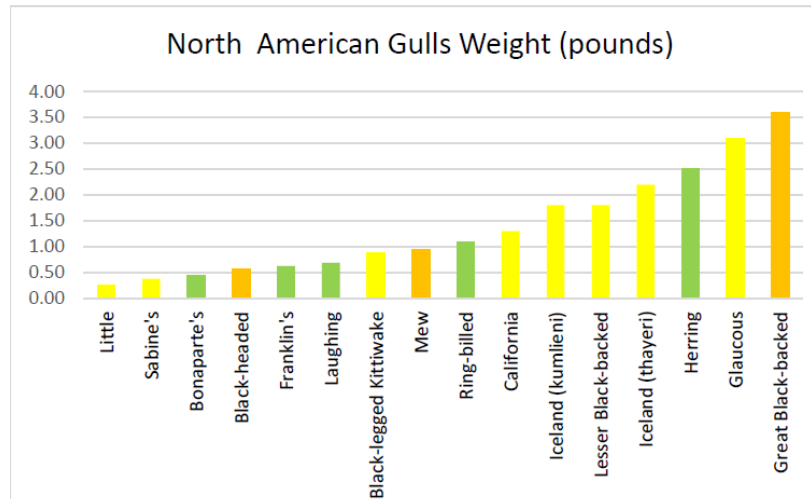
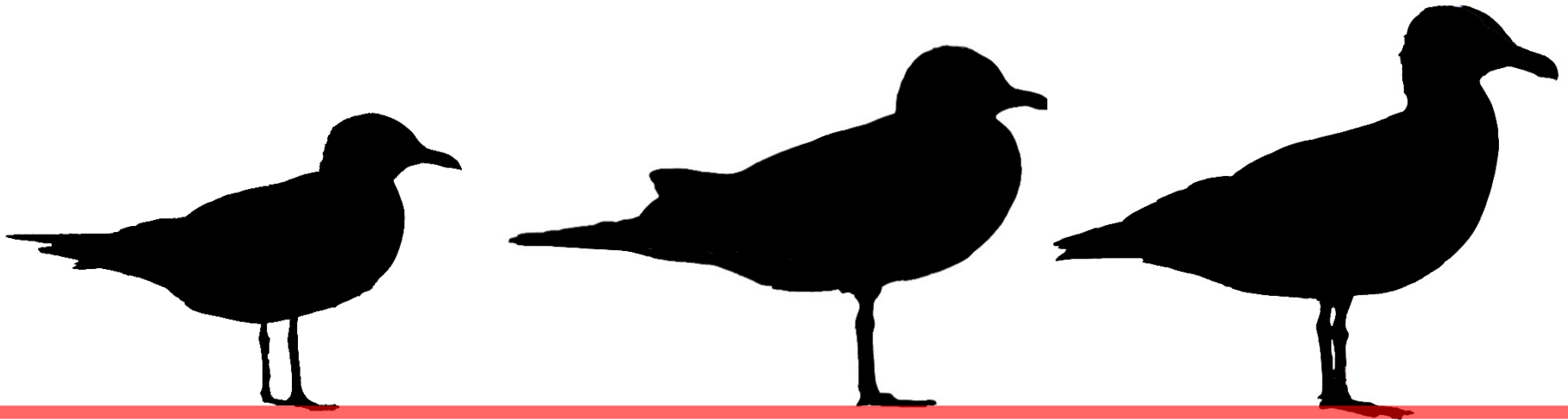
- ▶ Although a few are seen in winter and summer, for the most part **Franklin's** are migrants in Texas. Often seen overhead in loose follow-the-leader flocks in April & October.
- ▶ Note the call and the white-black-gray pattern of the wing-tips for overhead birds.
- ▶ Due to their hooded, or partially hooded (non-breeding) plumage, they are usually only confused with **Laughing**.
- ▶ In comparison to **Laughing**, **Franklin's** have shorter bills, wider eye-arcs, shorter legs, have a shorter, more-rotund build and more rounded wings.
- ▶ In the past the larger white spots on the folded primaries of the **Franklin's** has been touted as an ID point, but this can be ambiguous. Structure and the points mentioned above are better field marks.

# SIZE COMPARISON

**Franklin's**

**Ring-billed**

**Herring**



# PLUMAGE

## FRANKLIN'S ADULT BREEDING

Similar charcoal  
gray back

More prominent  
Eye arcs which often  
almost join in the back

Large white  
spots (variable)

Shorter,  
straighter bill

More compact  
build

**Laughing**

Sometimes  
pinkish in  
peak breeding

Broader white  
tertials

**Franklin's**

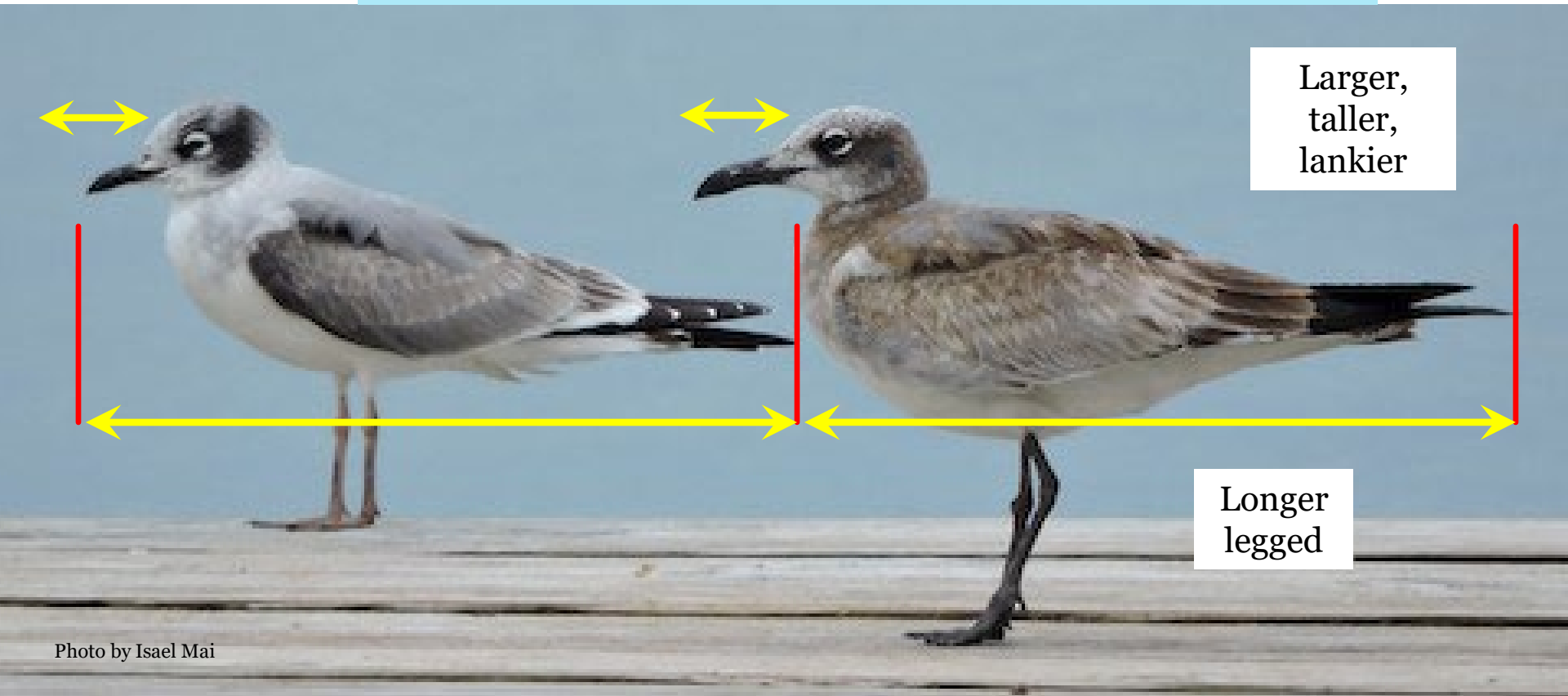
Shorter  
legs

Shorter,  
rounder  
wingtips

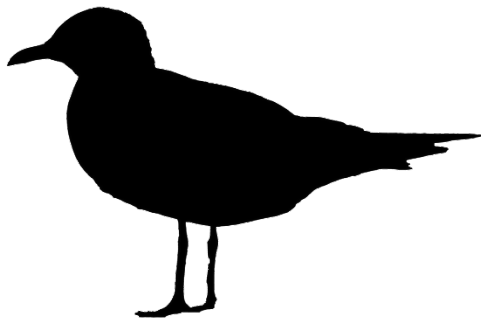
Less  
attenuated

Note that the head on the **Laughing** in this photo is turned slightly towards the camera, making the bill appear shorter than it is.

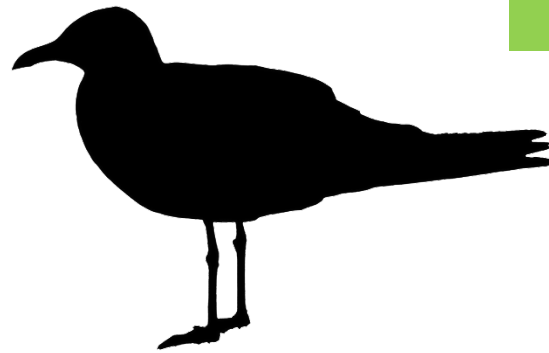
# FRANKLIN'S VS LAUGHING



**Franklin's**



**Laughing**





# FRANKLIN'S ADULT BREEDING

White

Black

Gray

Broader & rounder  
wings

Franklin's

Gradual transition  
from black  
to gray  
to whitish

Laughing



# HERRING

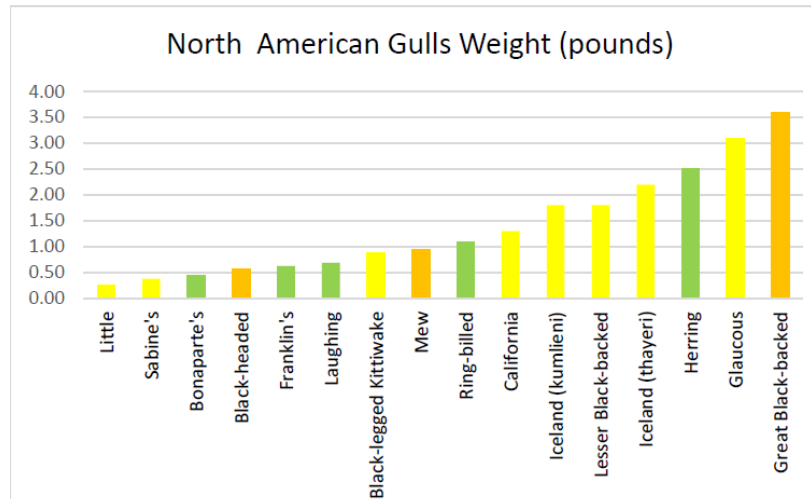
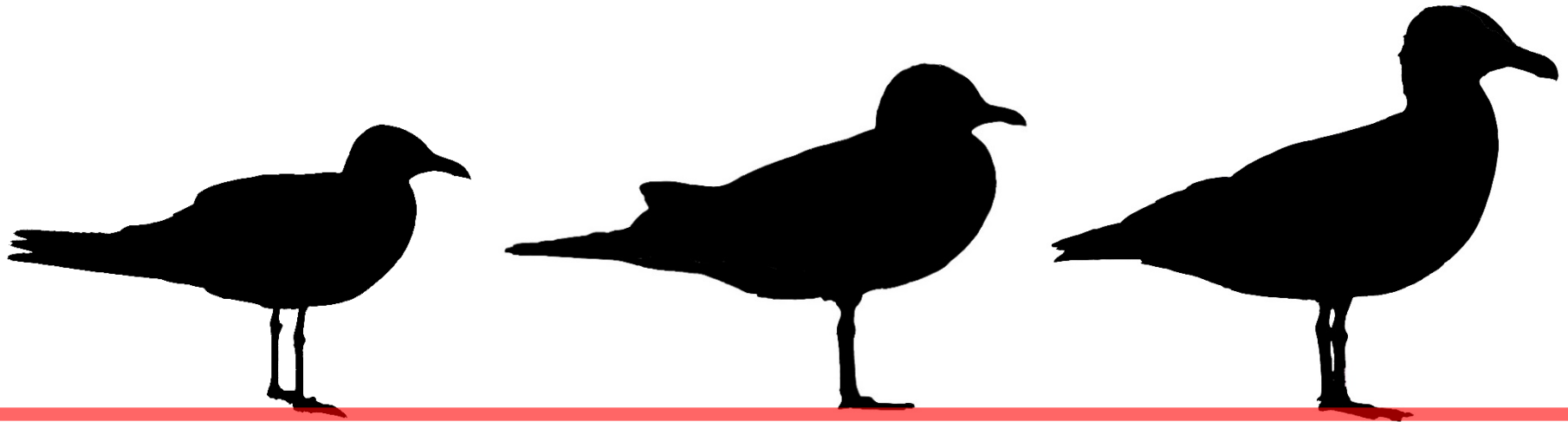
- ▶ **Herring** are by far the most common large white-headed gull.
- ▶ They vary in size and build, but should be considered the default pink-legged, large gull in Texas. They are distinctly larger than all the other common gulls.
- ▶ Their structure is variable, but generally more bulky in the belly than in the chest. They usually have relatively moderate wing projection beyond the tail, but some females can appear fairly long-winged.
- ▶ The bill of the **Herring** should be studied carefully it is medium-long and sports a fairly conspicuous gonydeal angle.
- ▶ The eye is usually light yellow in adults.

# SIZE COMPARISON

**Laughing**

**Ring-billed**

**Herring**





Streaking on neck  
can be fairly thick  
(non-breeding)

Head seems just a bit  
too small for body

Primaries not  
excessively long

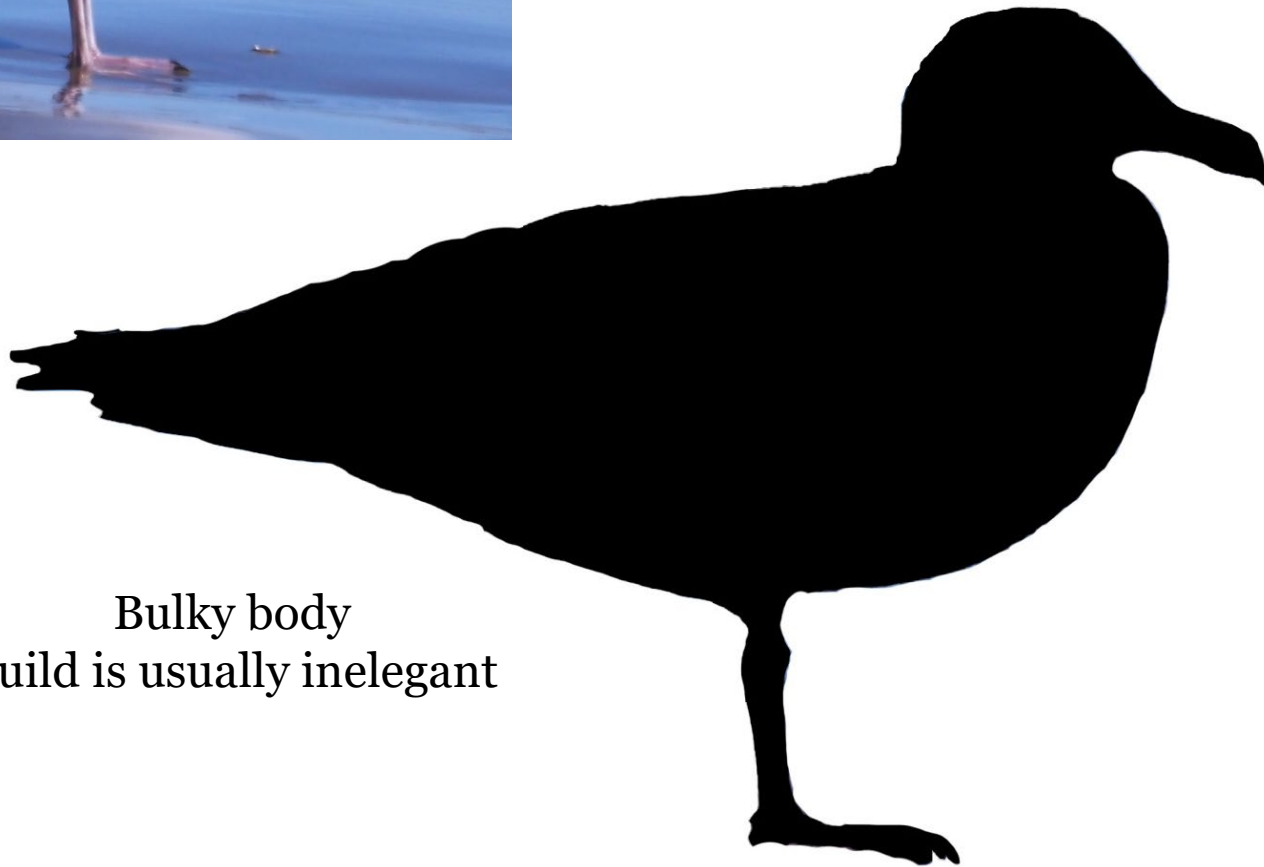


Pink legs

**HERRING**

Extend moderately  
past tail

# HERRING STRUCTURE



Bulky body  
Build is usually inelegant

# STRUCTURE: BILL & HEAD

## Ring-billed

Rounder  
head

Steeper  
forehead

Eye closer to  
center



## Herring

Flatter head

More bird  
behind eye

Eye more  
forward



Pulled taffy  
look of snout



# HERRING VS RING-BILLED VS LAUGHING



Photo by John Schwarz

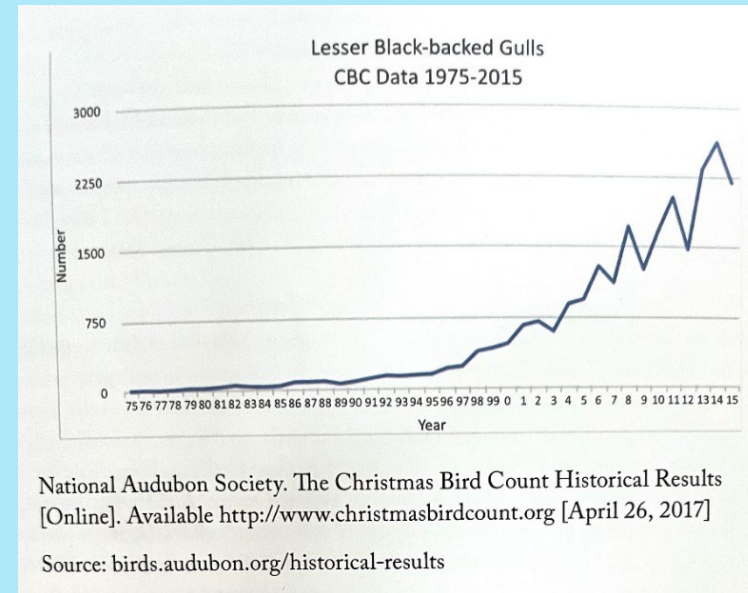


# LBBG

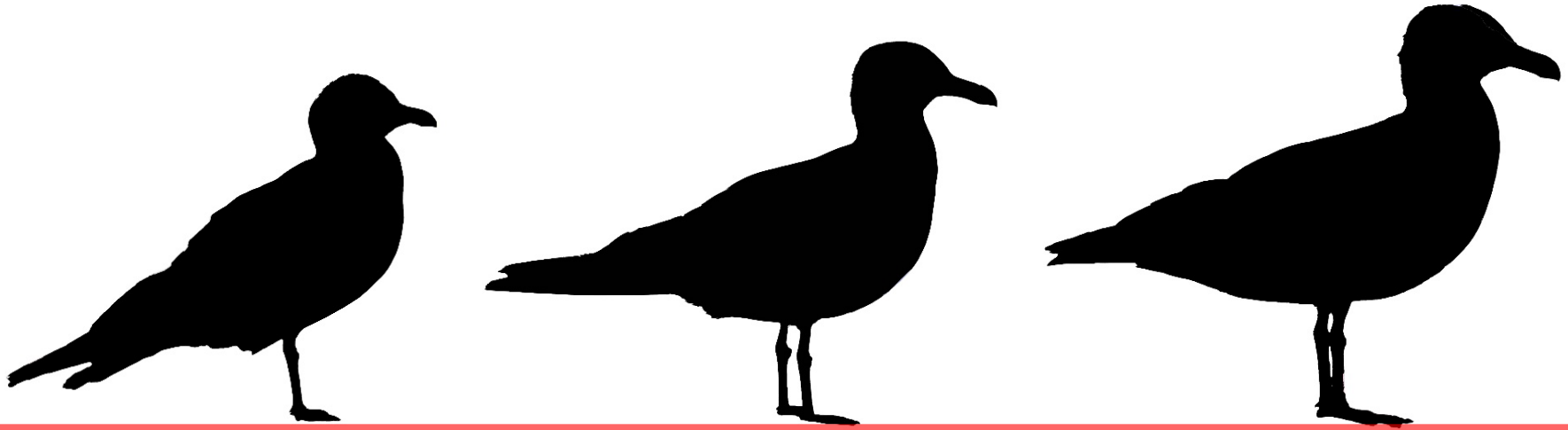
- ▶ The **Lesser Black-backed** has established a strong winter presence in North America and Texas over the last 25 years or so. It hatches primarily in Europe, Iceland and Greenland, but wanders to Texas in increasing numbers.
- ▶ Its characteristics should be compared to the **Herring** and **Ring-billed** for ID.
- ▶ The **LBBG** has long, narrow wings which usually extend well beyond the tail when standing.
- ▶ The structure is leaner and more chesty than the **Herring**, but not as lean as the **Ring-billed**.
- ▶ The bill is bullet shaped – slimmer and less hooked than the **Herring**.
- ▶ The LBBG often sports a “punched-in-the-eye” look due to dark feathers around the eye in winter.
- ▶ The leg color is yellow and this along with the dark back-color easily separates adults from **Herring**.
- ▶ Juvenile **LBBGs** are IDed by their structure and darker, if not black, back.

# LESSER BLACK-BACKED (LBBG)

- ▶ Not part of North American avifauna until 1934
- ▶ Increased rapidly in 80s and 90s
- ▶ Originally a breeder in Europe
- ▶ Expanded to Iceland, Greenland, & then NA
- ▶ Same for Texas
  - ▶ A few in the 60s & 70s
  - ▶ More in the 80s & 90s
  - ▶ Removed from Review List in 1997
- ▶ If you go gulling enough – you will find one



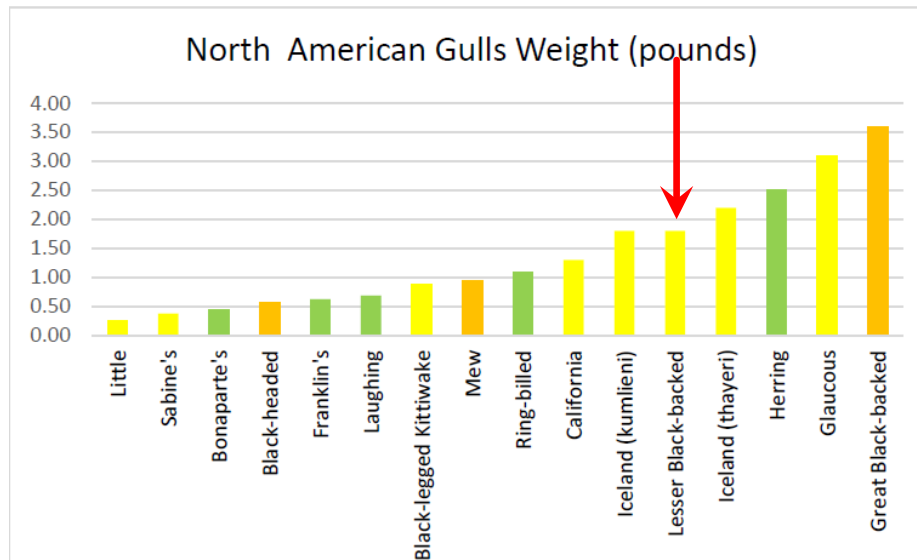
# SIZE COMPARISON



**Ring-billed**

**LBBG**

**Herring**



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Long primary projection  
Dark back  
Punched in the eye look  
Chesty build  
Slimmer, bullet-like bill

LBBG

LBBG

LBBG

Slimmer than **Herring**,

Slightly bulkier than  
**Ring-billed**



# Ring-billed

LBBG

Punched in eye look

Bullet-shaped  
bill

Dark back

Yellow  
legs

Long wings  
beyond tail  
(usually)

Note the effects of the angle of light in this photo. **LBBG** is much darker backed than **Ring-billed**, but because of the angle to the sun, they both appear fairly dark.

A Laysan Booby (LBBG) is shown in profile, standing on a sandy beach. The bird has a white head and neck with a yellow eye, a dark body, and a long, pointed beak. It is looking down at a dead fish lying on the sand. The background is a clear blue sky.

LBBG

Yellow eye, slim head and  
“punched in eye” often  
results in a fierce look



# STRUCTURE COMPARISON

Long and tapered

Bulky,  
but not in upper chest

Longer, more tapered  
with bulky upper chest



**Ring-billed**



**Herring**



**LBBG**

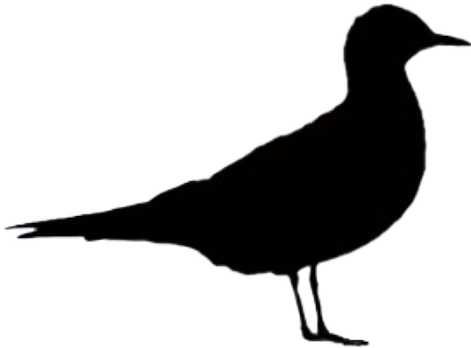
# BONAPARTE'S

- ▶ The smallest of the Texas Hex, the **Bonaparte's** is usually seen snatching food items from the surface of lakes and the Gulf shores in the Texas winter.
- ▶ With practice it can be identified from a distance by its buoyant flight style, delicate structure and habit of picking food items from the water's surface.
- ▶ The white leading edge and black trailing edge of the wings are often visible from a distance.
- ▶ At closer range the Bonaparte's size, thin black bill and black spot behind the eye are the best field marks.
- ▶ It has pink legs.
- ▶ Juvenile **Bonaparte's** are one of the "M-birds" showing a black bar across the wing coverts and a black leading and trailing edges of the wing.

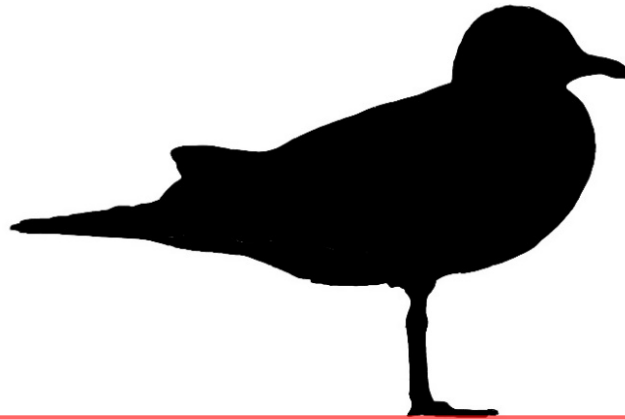


# SIZE COMPARISON

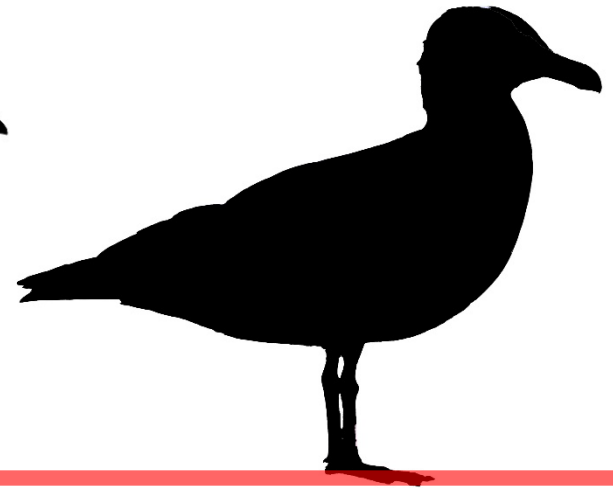
**Bonaparte's**



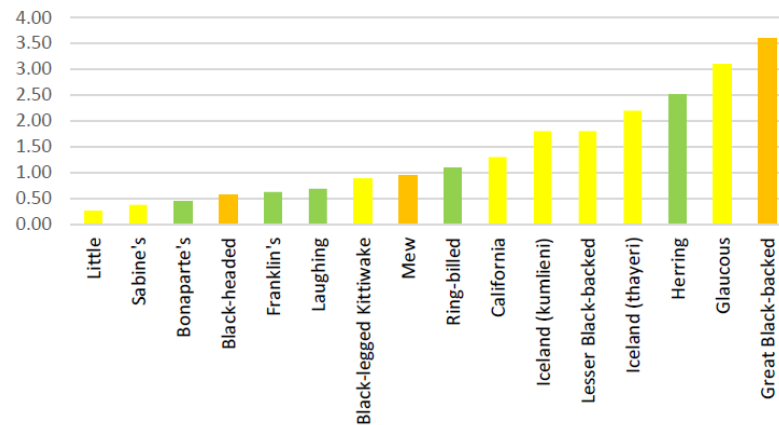
**Ring-billed**



**Herring**



North American Gulls Weight (pounds)



# WHY IS THIS NOT A RING-BILLED?

Smaller

Taller head

Ear patch

Thin, black  
bill

Leg color

**Bonaparte's**

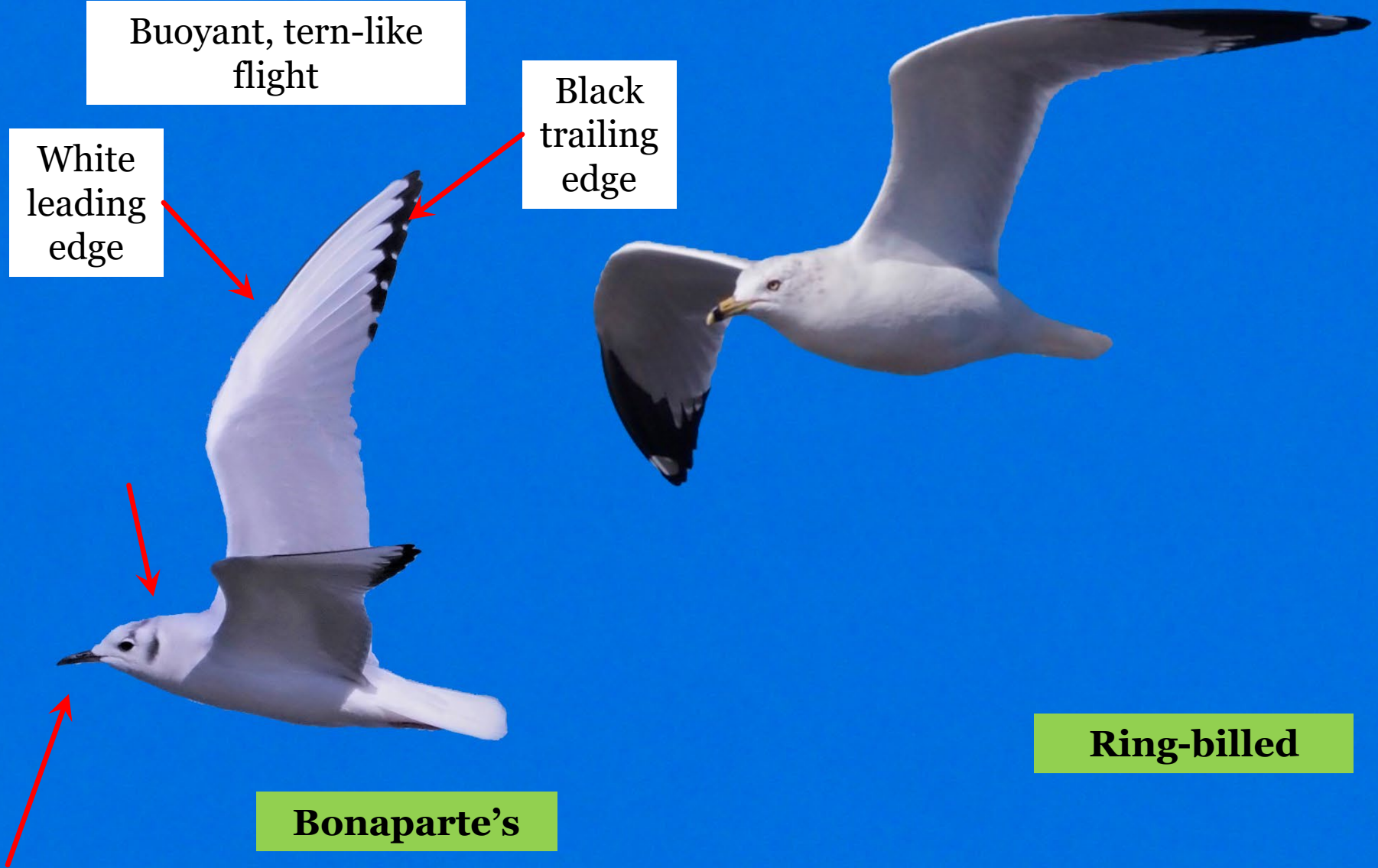
**Ring-billed**

# WHY IS THIS NOT A RING-BILLED?

Buoyant, tern-like  
flight

White  
leading  
edge

Black  
trailing  
edge



**Bonaparte's**

**Ring-billed**



# BONAPARTE'S AGE PROGRESSION

August



Photo by Robert G Buckert

October



Photo by Dan O'Brian

December



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

March



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

March



Photo by Nancy Villone

January



Photo by Brian Johnson

# BONAPARTE'S ADULT – BASIC

Head white with  
black ear-spot

Basic (Aug-Apr)

Gray sides of neck  
against white  
under body

Legs pink  
to orange

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Wings & back  
contrast to white  
leading edge

Black  
trailing  
edge

White outer-  
primaries

Head white with  
black ear-spot

Basic (Aug-Apr)

# BONAPARTE'S ADULT – BASIC

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Tail white with  
narrow black  
subterminal band.

Dark trailing  
edge of wing

Dark leading edge of  
primaries



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

# Texas Hex & 6+1 Wandering Texans By adult back color



Lesser Black-backed

## Dark-backed Gulls

### Medium-Dark-backed Gulls



Laughing



Franklin's



Sabine's

Paintings by David A. Sibley

### Medium-backed Gulls



Black-legged  
Kittiwake



Little



California



Bonaparte's



Iceland

### Pale-backed Gulls



Ring-billed



Herring

### Reference bird



Glaucous

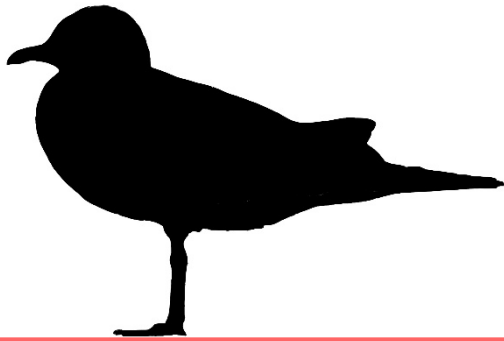
ICELAND



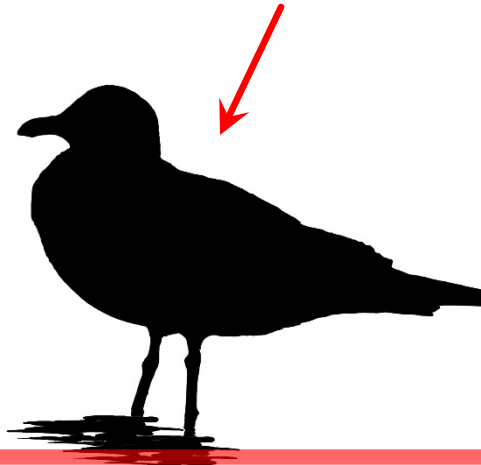
# ICELAND

- ▶ The smallest of the Texas Hex, the **Bonaparte's** is usually seen snatching food items from the surface of lakes and the Gulf shores in the Texas winter.
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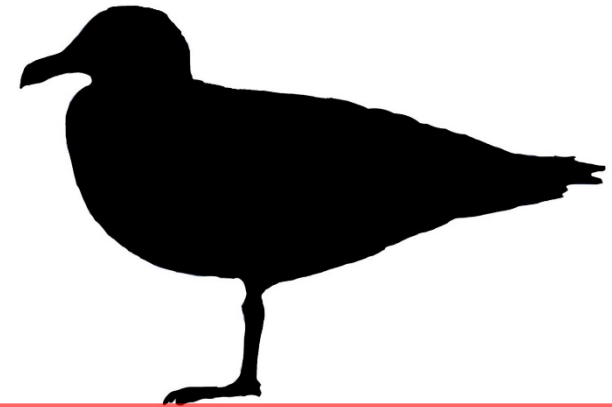
# SIZE COMPARISON



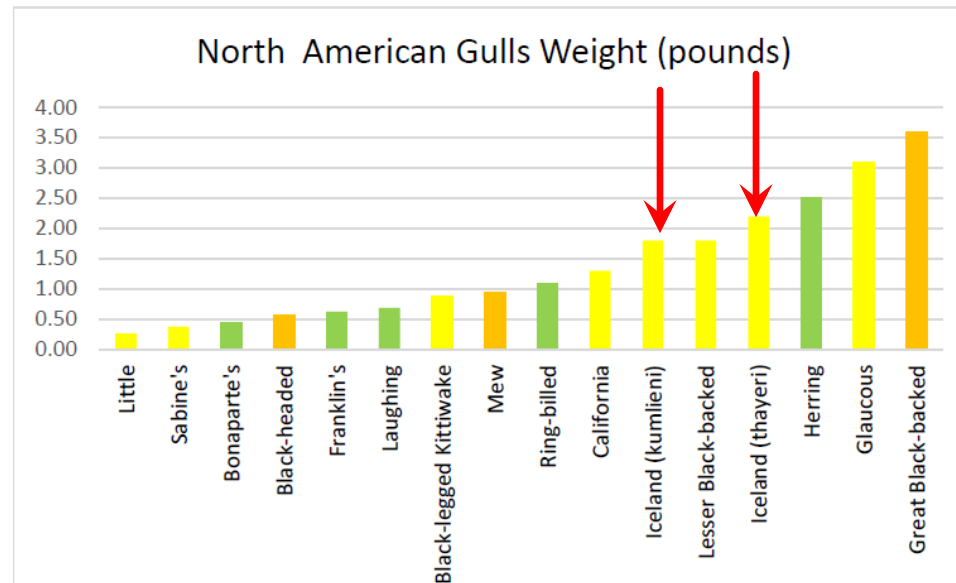
**Ring-billed**



**Iceland**



**Herring**



# ICELAND VS HERRING



**Herring**

**Iceland**



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep **Oct** Nov Dec

# ICELAND (*THAYERI*)

Juvenile scapulars  
(same age as coverts)

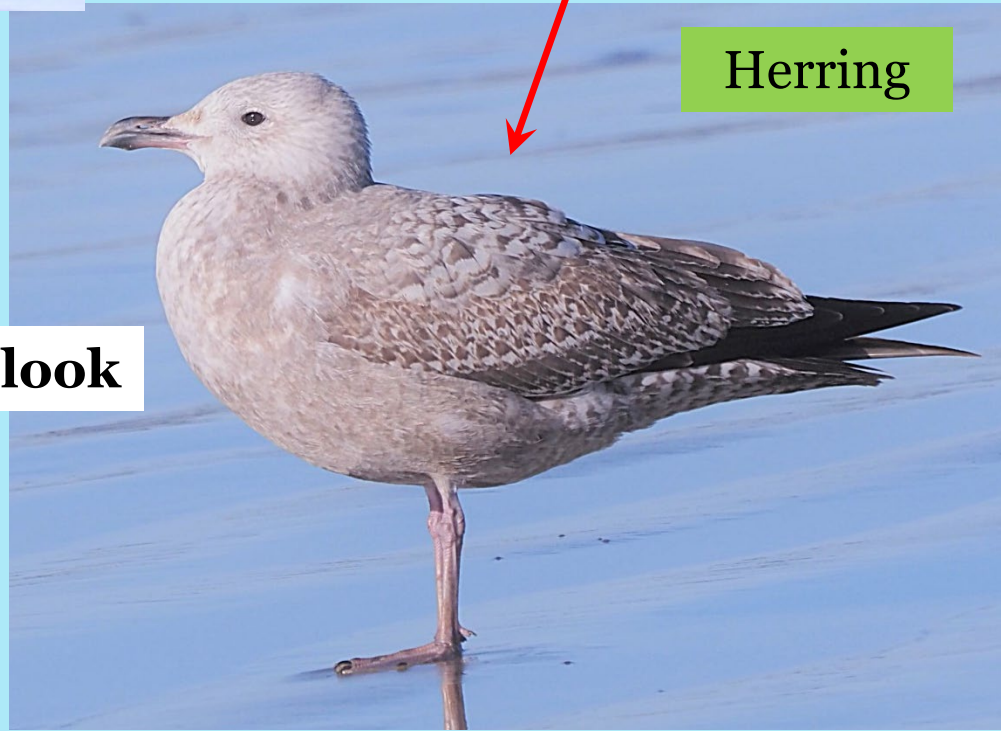


Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep **Oct** Nov Dec





**Iceland  
(*thayeri*)**



**Herring**

**2-toned look**

# HEAD & BILL

ICELAND  
(*THAYERI*)



ICELAND  
(*THAYERI*)



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**Herring**



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson





# ICELAND (*KUMLIENTI*)

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# ICELAND (*GLAUCOIDES*)

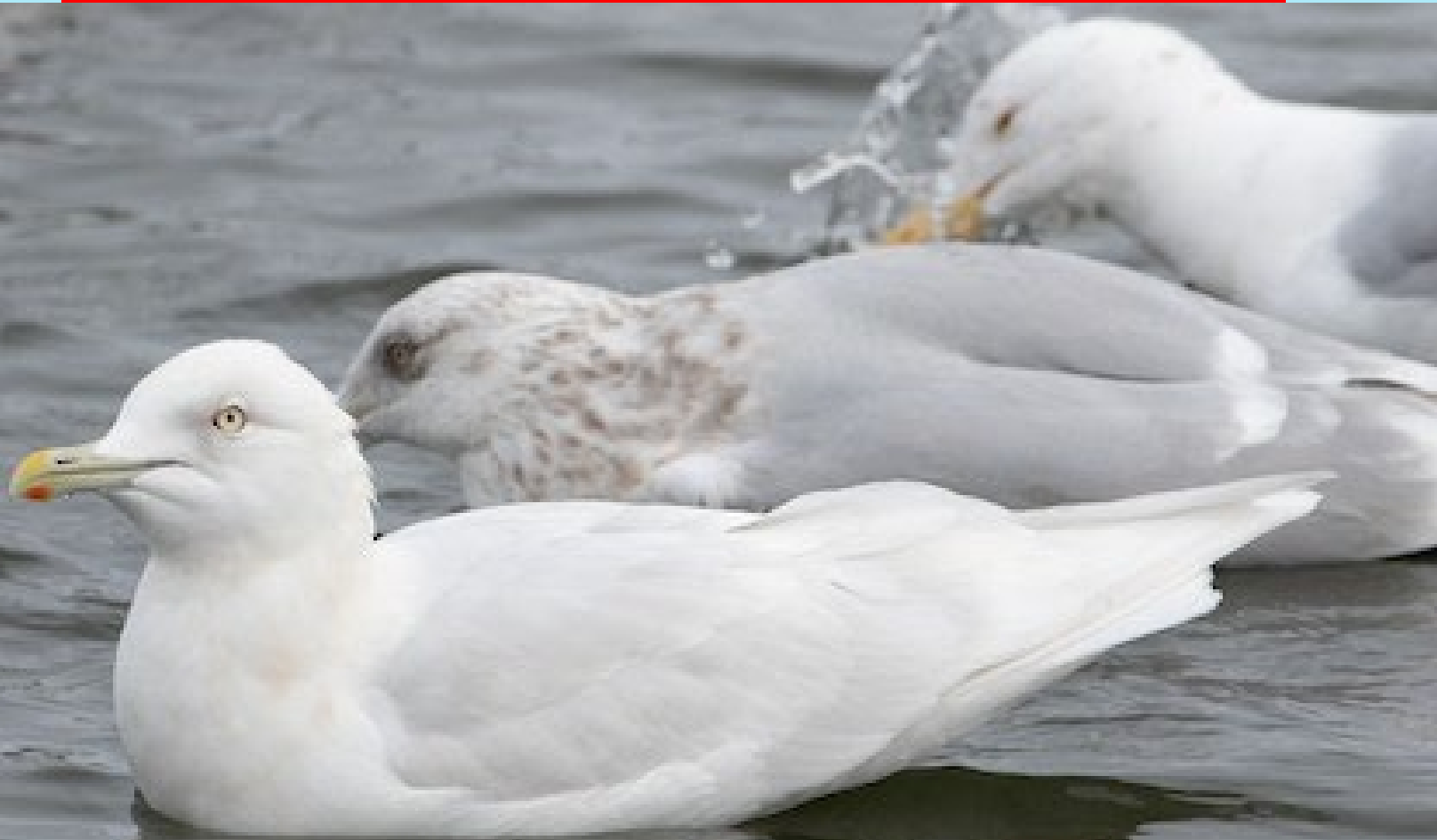
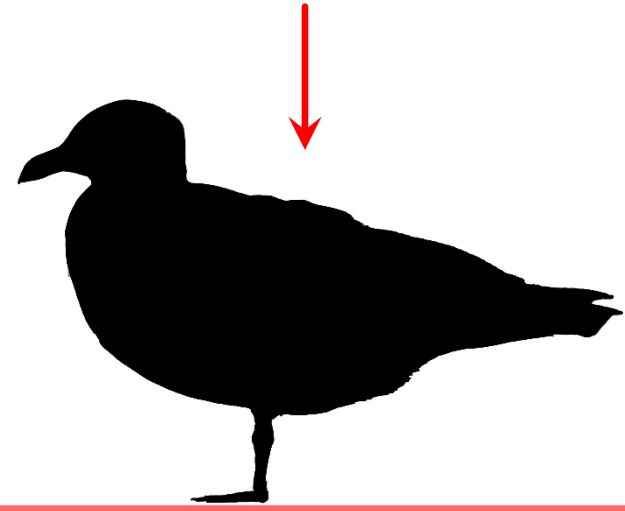
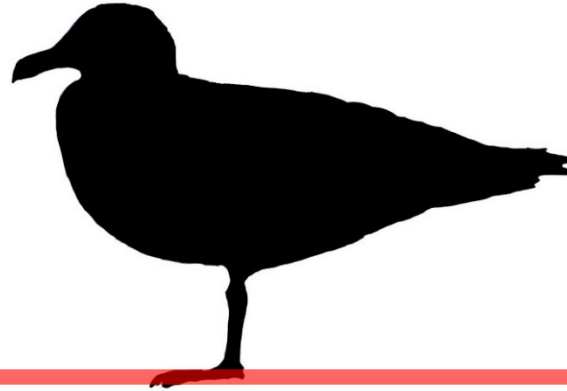
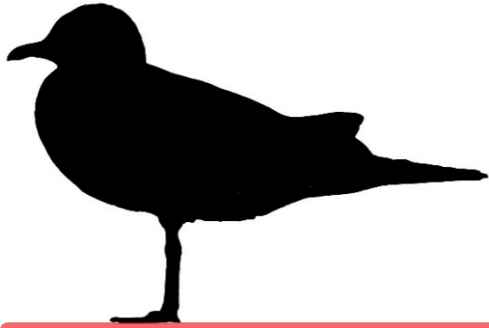


Photo by Blair Dudeck



**GLAUCOUS**

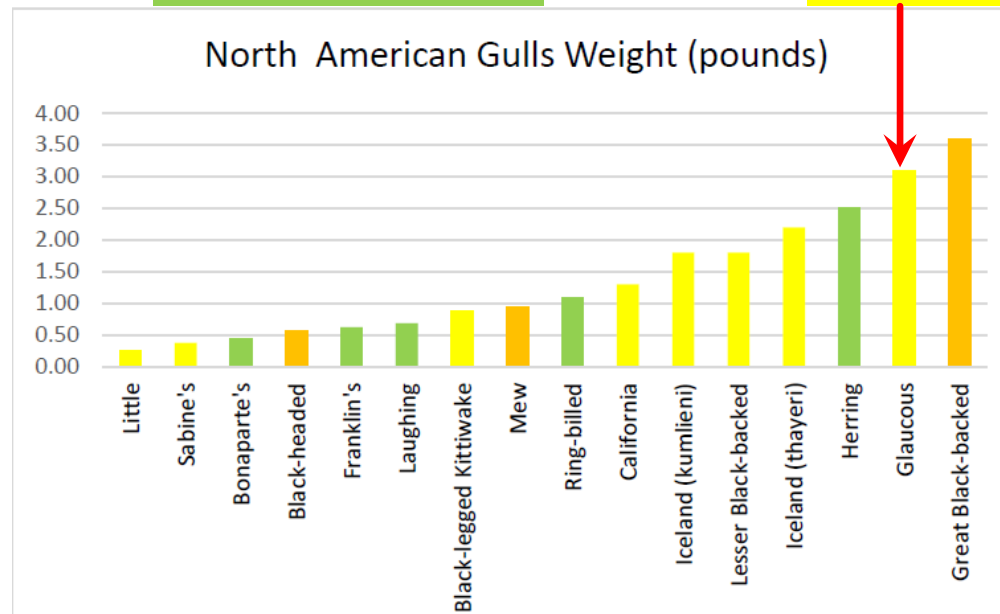
# SIZE COMPARISON



**Ring-billed**

**Herring**

**Glaucous**



**GLAUCOUS**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> CYCLE**

**Large, robust,  
proportionate  
head & neck**

**Short-ish  
stout bill**

**Pink & black  
Sharp  
demarcation**



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec



# GLAUCOUS 1<sup>ST</sup> CYCLE



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec



# GLAUCOUS ADULT

**Big head,  
thick neck  
robust  
proportions**

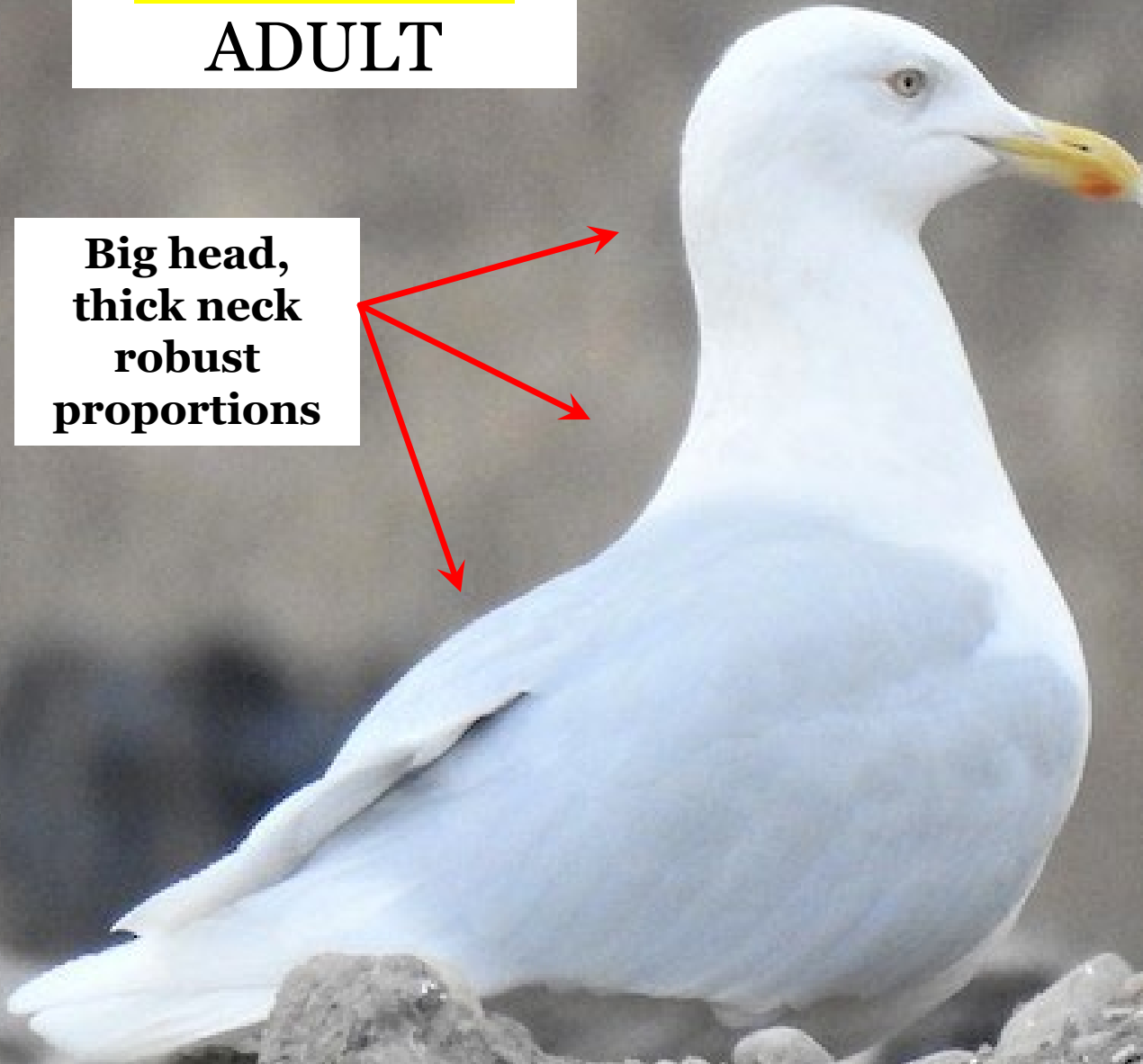


Photo by Lucio "Luc" Fazio

**CALIFORNIA**

# SIZE COMPARISON

Ring-billed

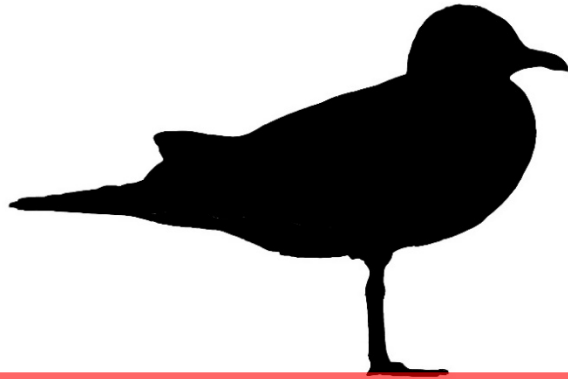


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

California

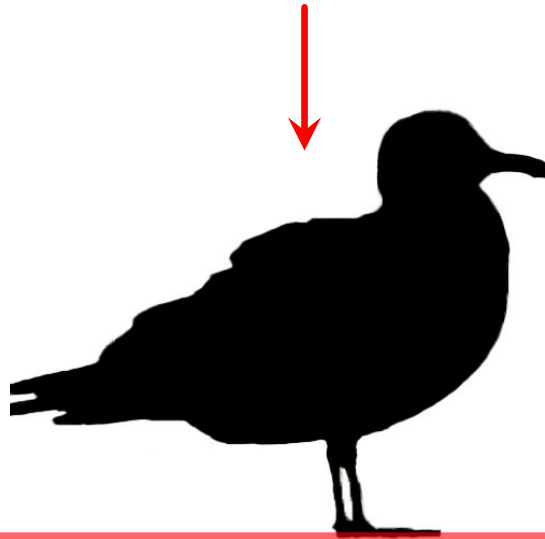


Photo by James Rieman

Herring

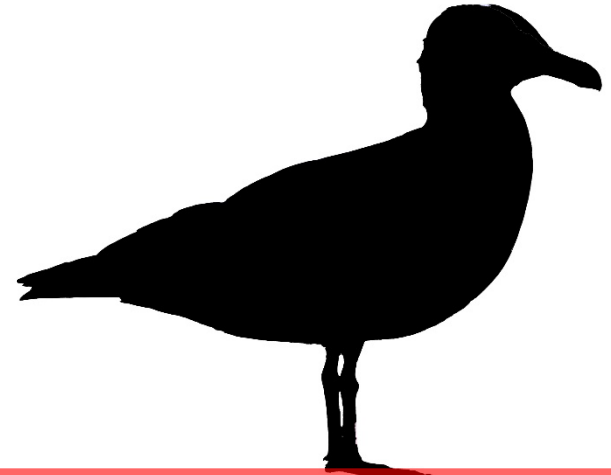
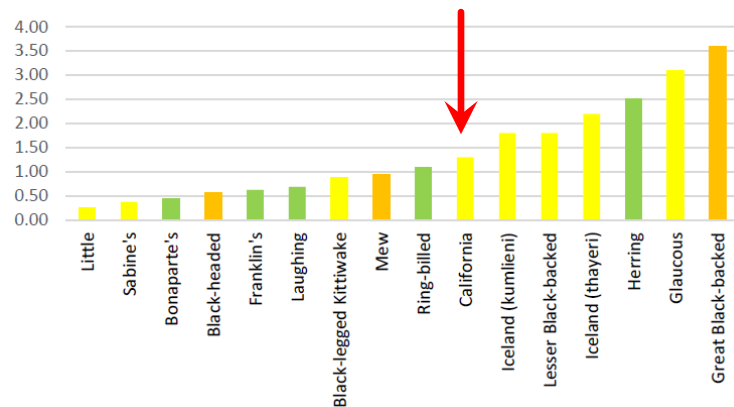


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Larger than  
**Ring-billed**  
Smaller than  
**Herring**

North American Gulls Weight (pounds)



# HERRING VS CALIFORNIA

(MASTER ARTWORK BY PLUMBIUS V)

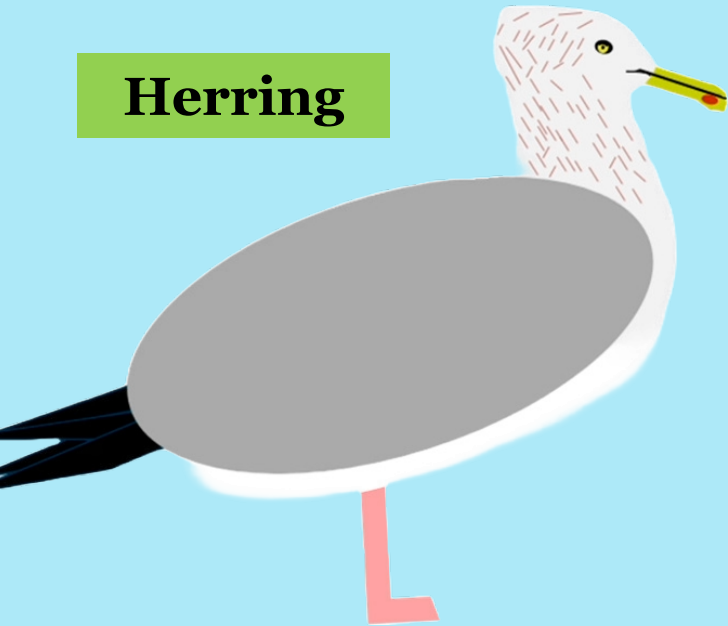


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Photos by James Rieman

**Herring**



Artwork by Plumbius V

**California**





# STRUCTURE

**Fairly long,  
parallel-sided  
bill**

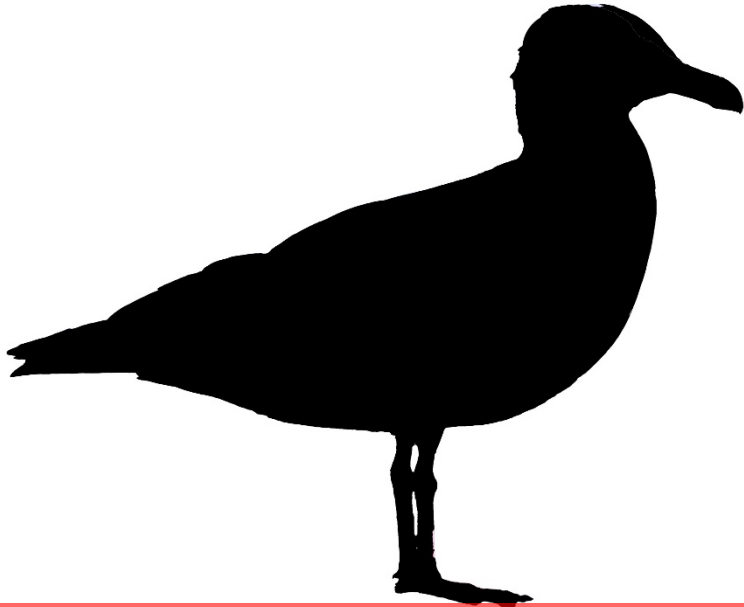


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**Herring**

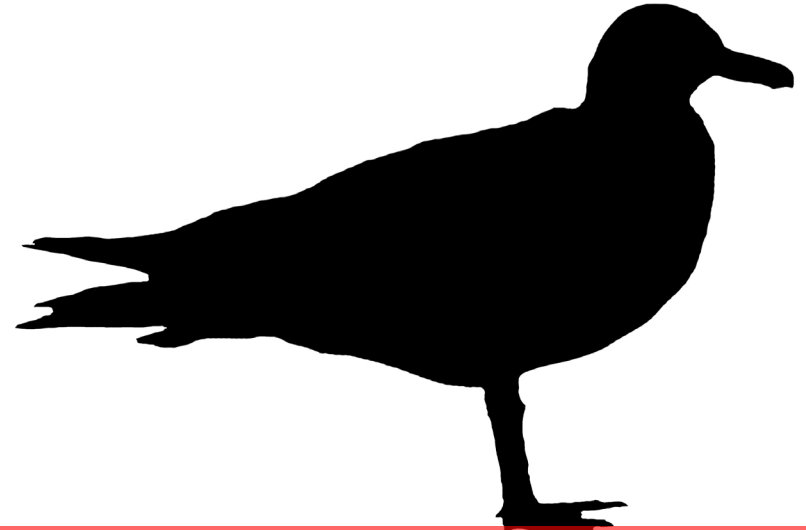


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**California**

**Between Herring &  
Ring-billed size**

**Dark eye**

**Fairly long,  
parallel-sided  
bill**

**California**

**Bulkier, more robust  
than Ring-billed**

**Black & red  
marks on bill**

**Long wings**



SABINE'S

# ID GROUP: THE “M-BIRDS”





# SIZE COMPARISON

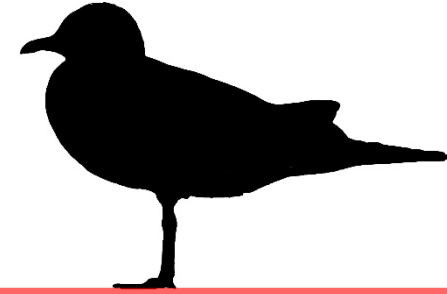
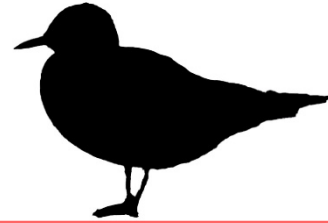


Photo by Darren Clarke

Photo by Matthew Pendleton

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

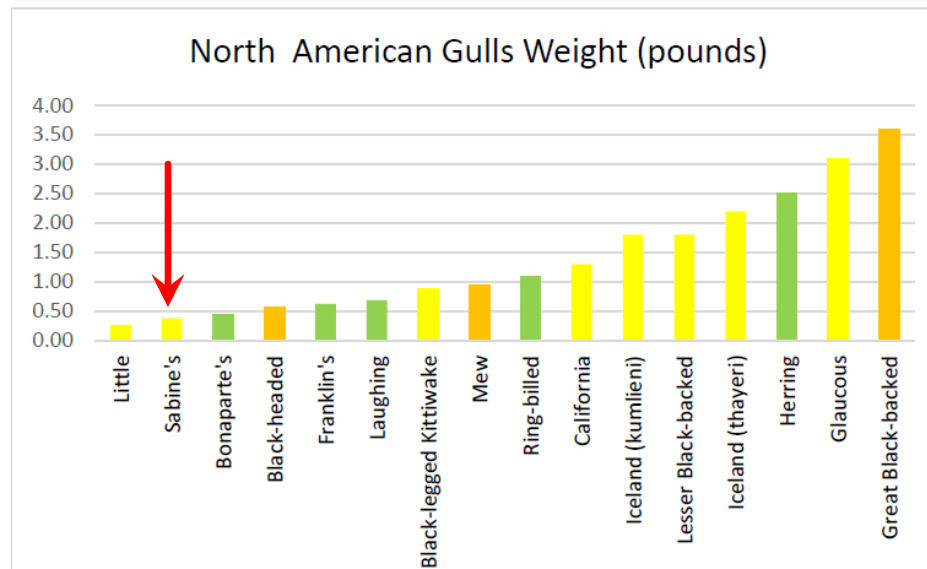
Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**Little**

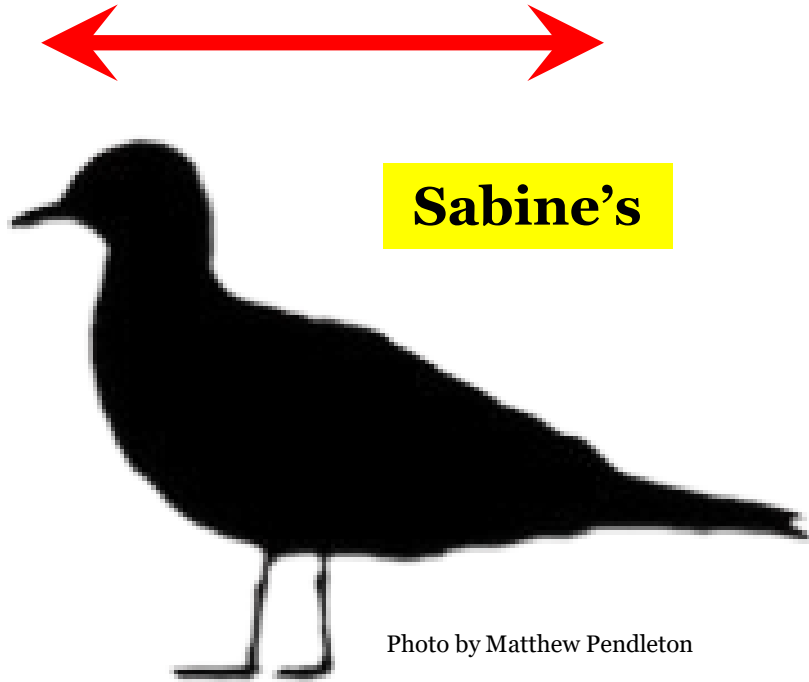
**Sabine's**

**Bonaparte's**

**Ring-billed**

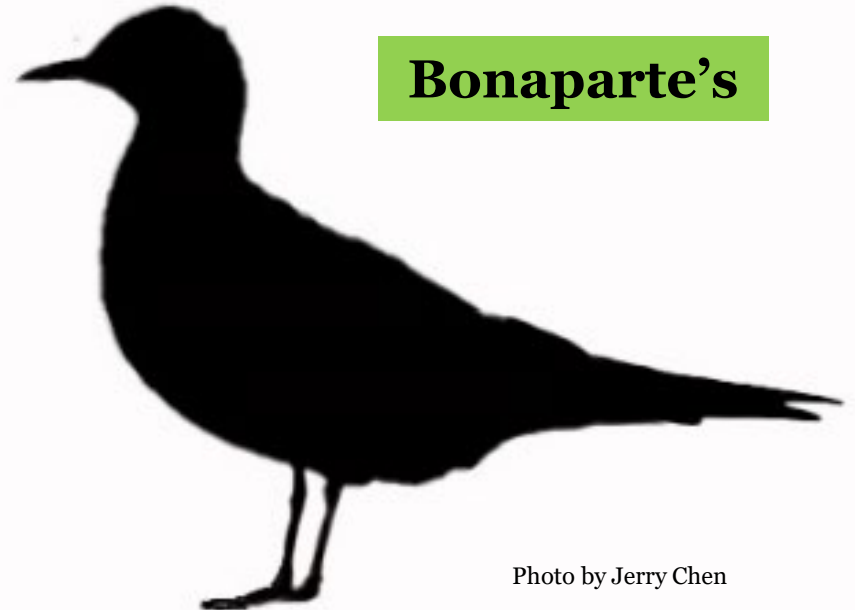


# STRUCTURE



**Sabine's**

Photo by Matthew Pendleton



**Bonaparte's**

Photo by Jerry Chen

# SABINE'S JUVENILE (1<sup>ST</sup> WINTER (SEPT))

Scaley back

Photo by Andrew Theus

# SABINE'S JUVENILE HORNSBY BEND (SEPT 2016)



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Long neck  
with gray sides

High “keel” in back



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



# SABINE'S ADULT (WINTER)



Photo by Bryant Olsen



Photo by Jay McGowan

# BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE

# SIZE COMPARISON

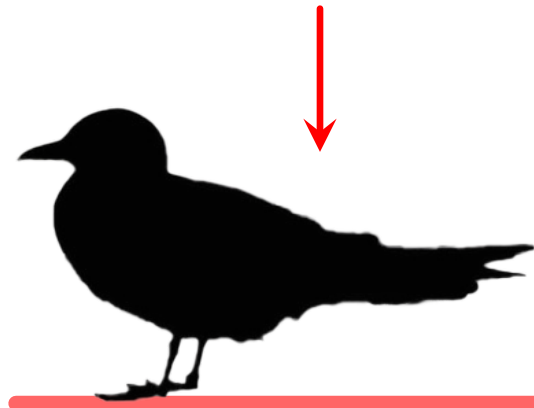


Photo by Alex Lamoreaux

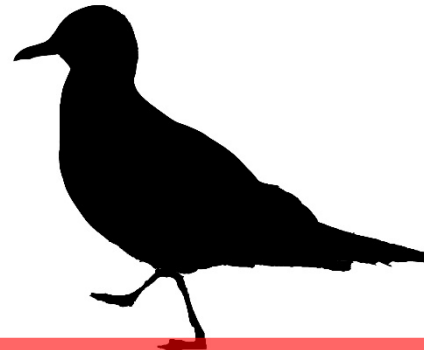


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

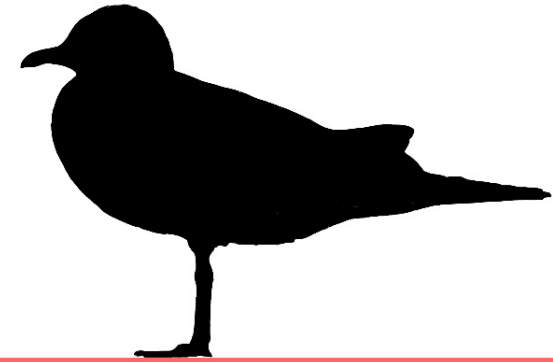
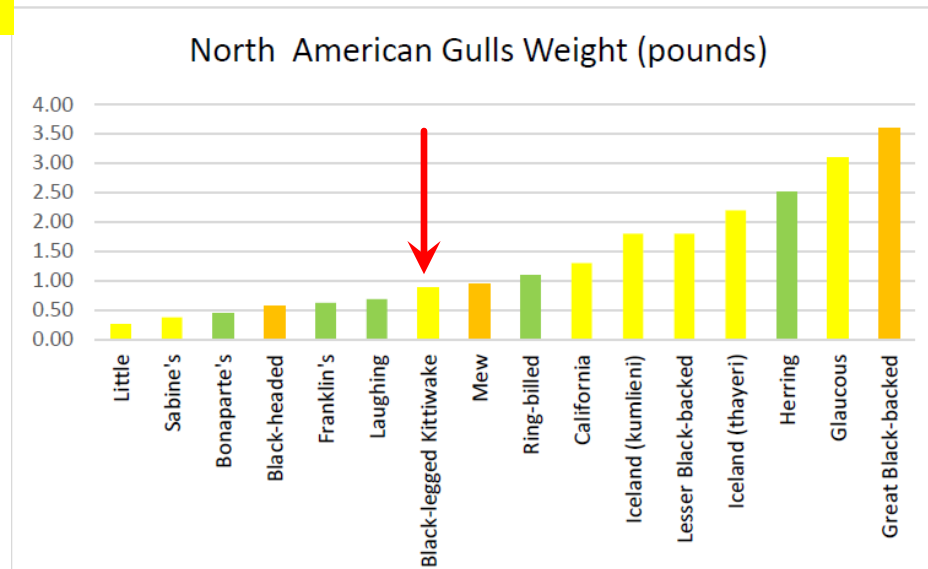


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**Black-legged  
Kittiwake**

**Short-billed**

**Ring-billed**



# STRUCTURE

**Black-legged  
Kittiwake**



Photo by Alex Lamoreaux

**Ring-billed**

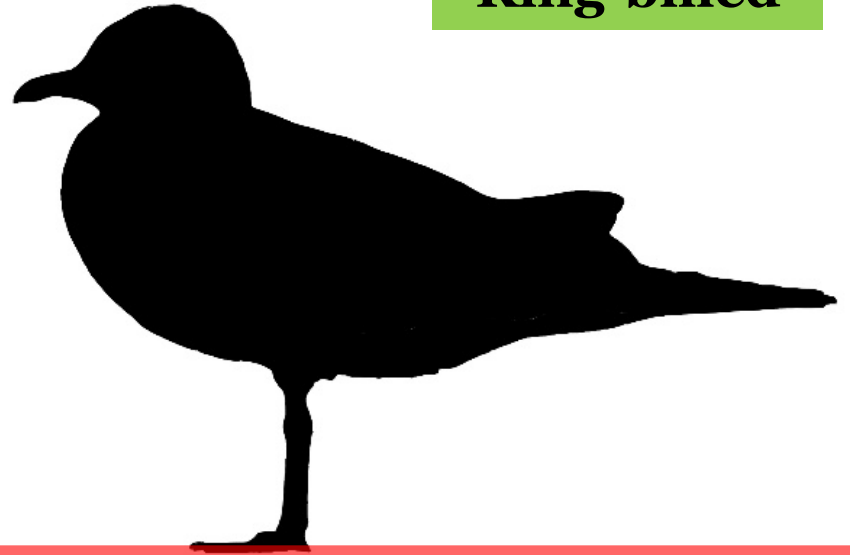


Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



# LAKE BALMORHEA NOVEMBER 2021

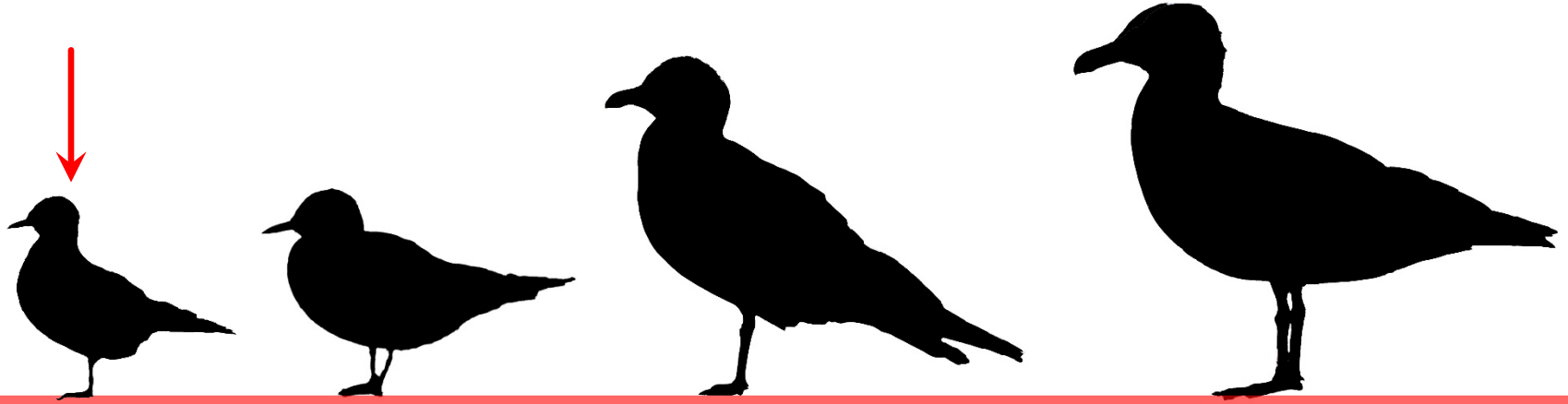
**Black-legged  
Kittiwake**



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**LITTLE**

# SIZE COMPARISON



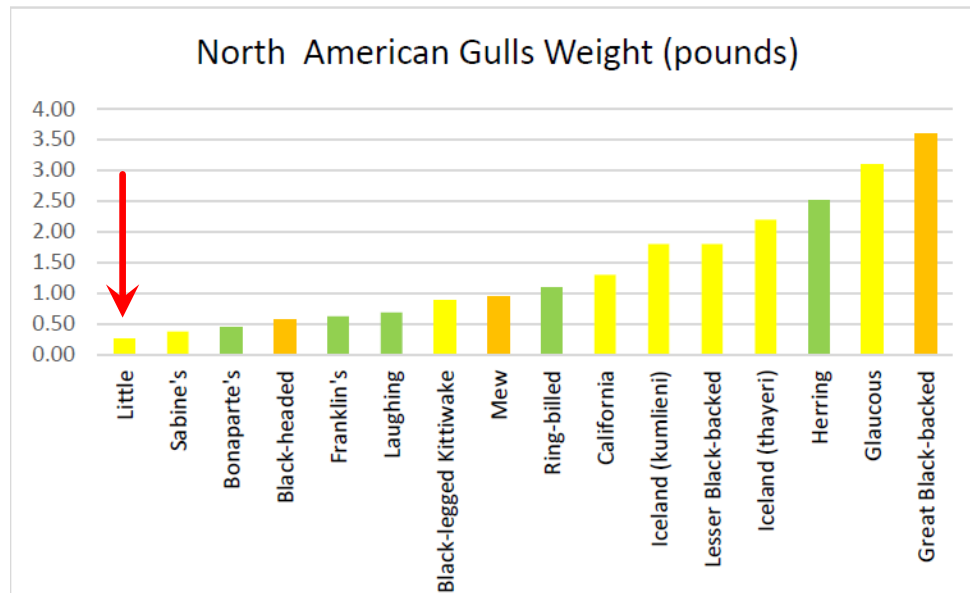
Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**Little**

**Bonaparte's**

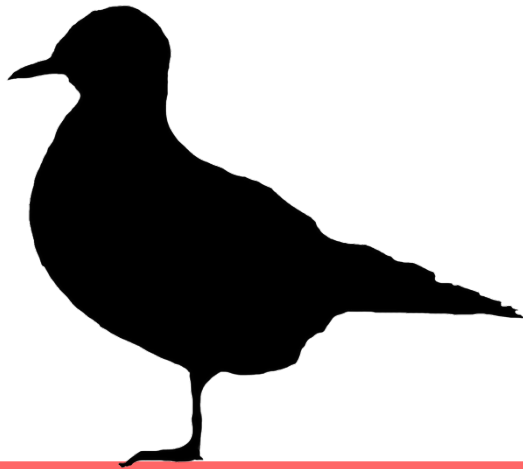
**Ring-billed**

**Herring**

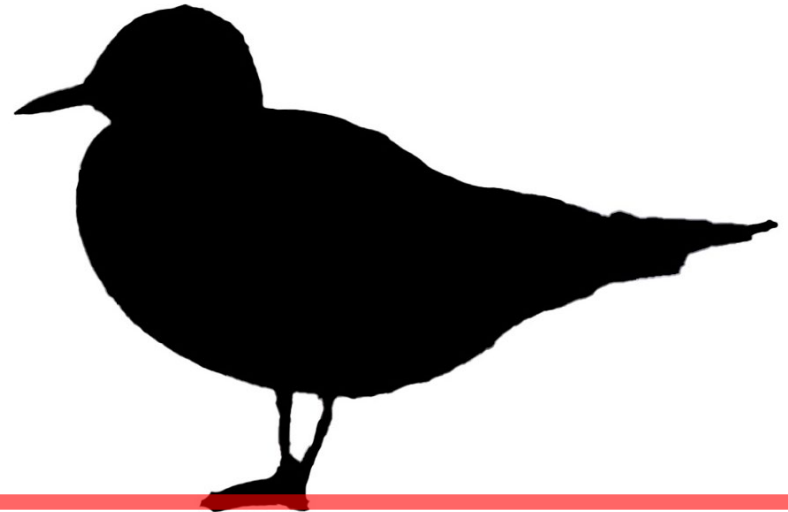


# STRUCTURE

**Little**



**Bonaparte's**



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson



# SIZE COMPARISON



LITTLE  
ADULT – ALTERNATE  
(JUN)



Photo by Lars Peterson



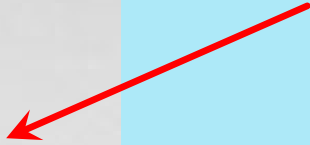
**Little**

LITTLE  
ADULT – BASIC

Photo by Alex Lamoreaux

# WHY IS THIS NOT A KITTIWAKE ?

**Black collar**



**Little**

Photo by Joe Wing

**Black-legged  
Kittiwake**

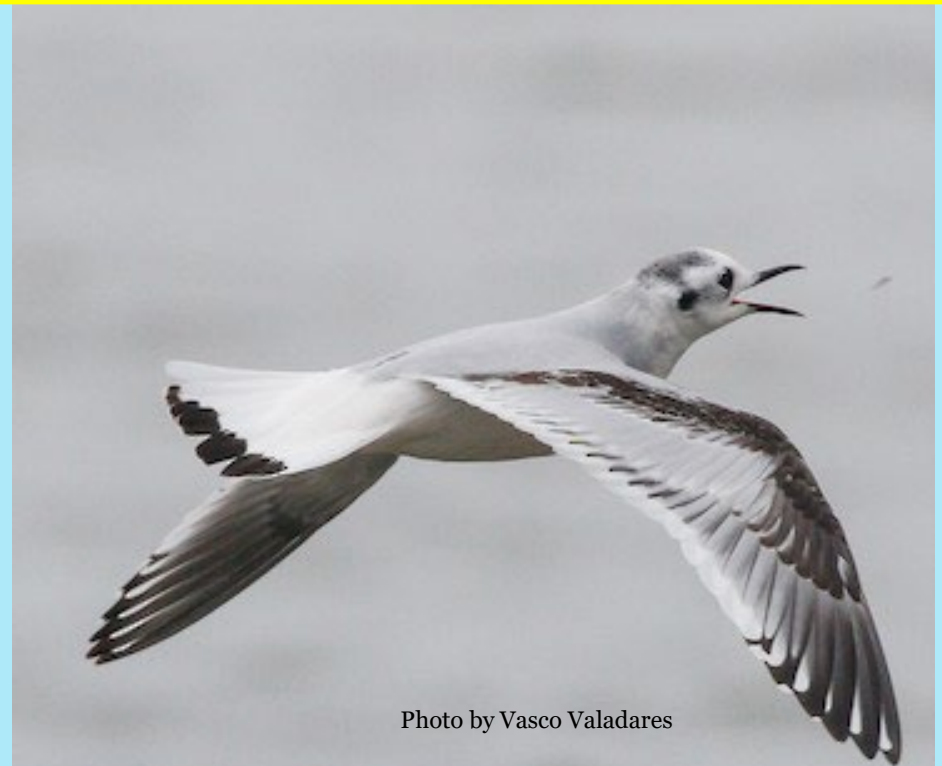


Photo by Vasco Valadares