

# TEXAS GULLS OVERVIEW 2026

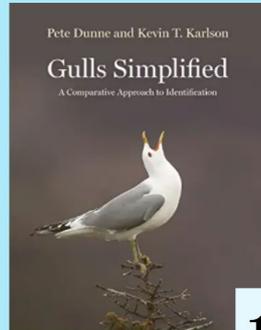


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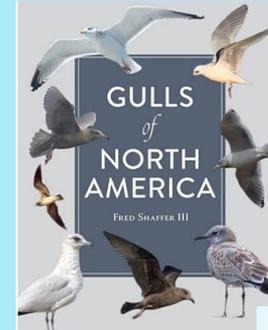
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# REFERENCES

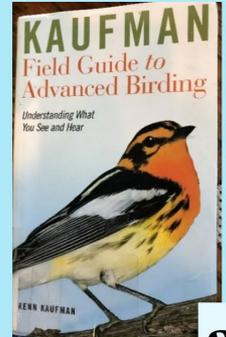


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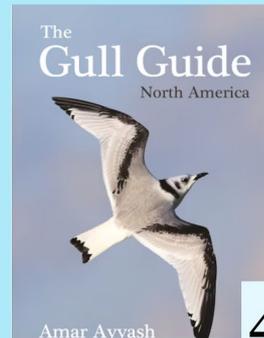
# REFERENCES



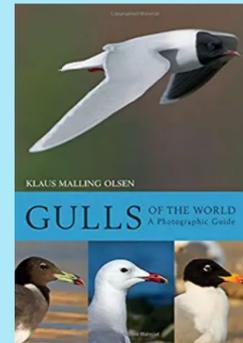
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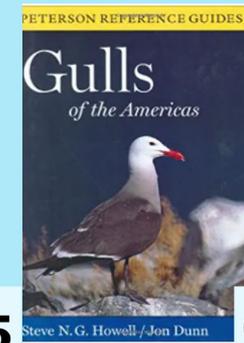
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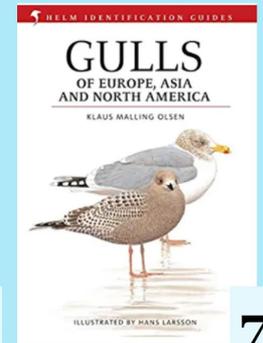
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5



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 6 (+1) Wandering Texans 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 (33+1)

Gulls of Texas (25+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

5 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 the place to start.
- ▶ **Plumage Details**–should not be ignored, but an identification should not be based on them alone.



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

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

# 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

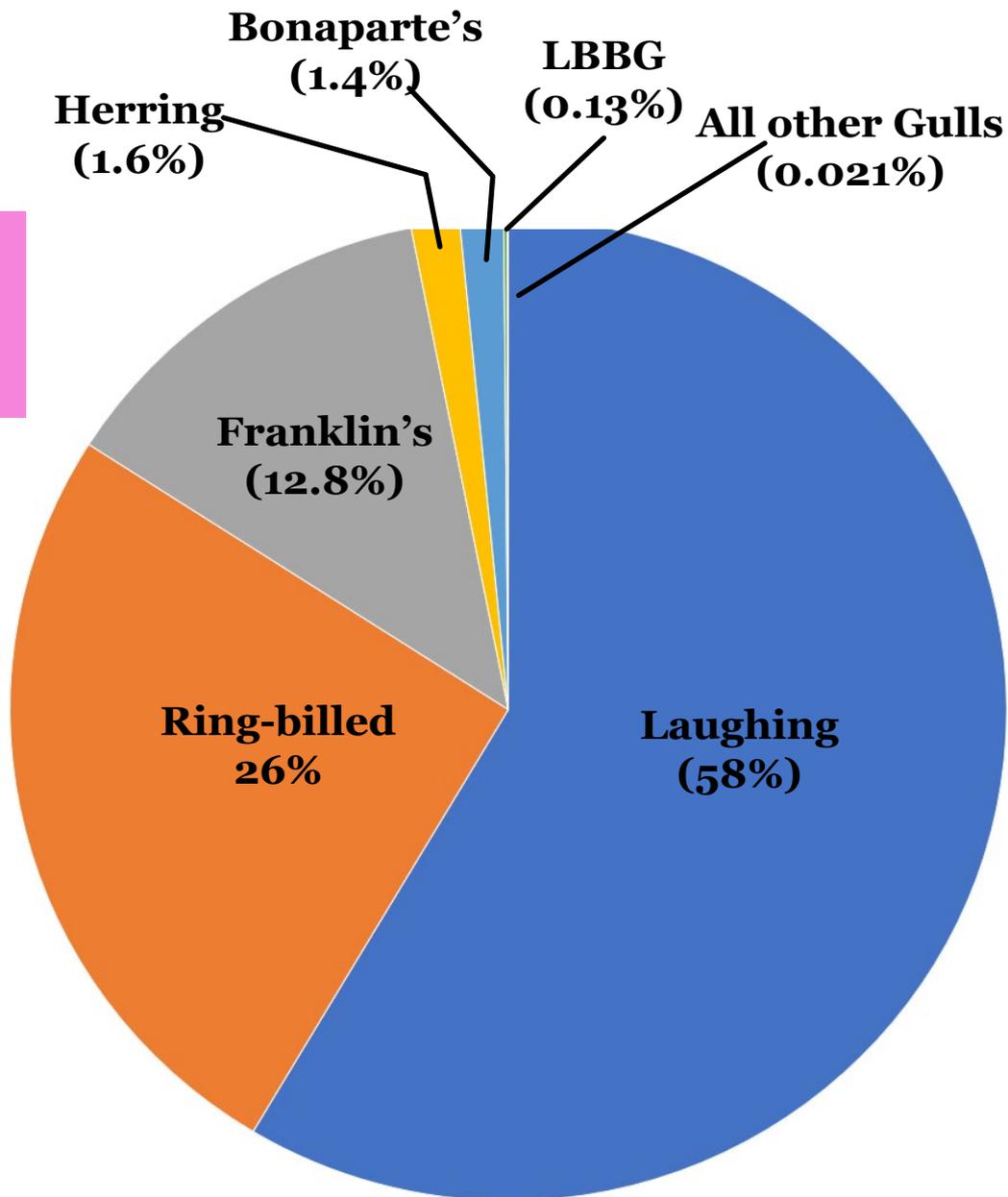
# THE TEXAS HEX DISTRIBUTION (JEFF'S TEXAS GULLS RULE)

## Jeff's Texas-Gulls Rule

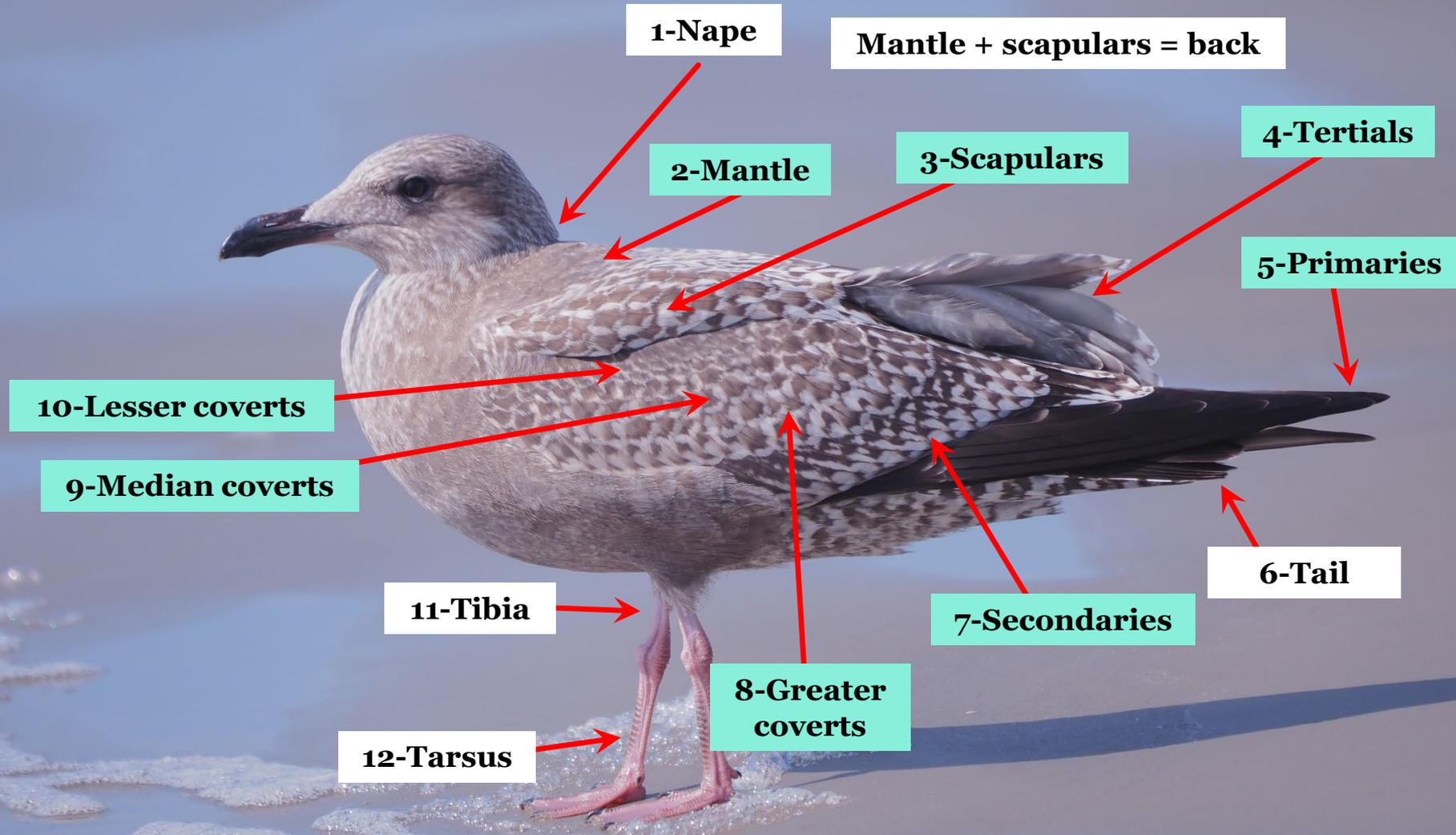
- 1) Coast Year-round – think **Laughing** first
- 2) In-land in winter – think **Ring-billed** first
- 3) Migration overhead – think **Franklin's** first
- 4) If it's a bigg-un! – think **Herring** First
- 5) Black back ? – think **LBBG** first

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

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



# GULL TOPOGRAPHY

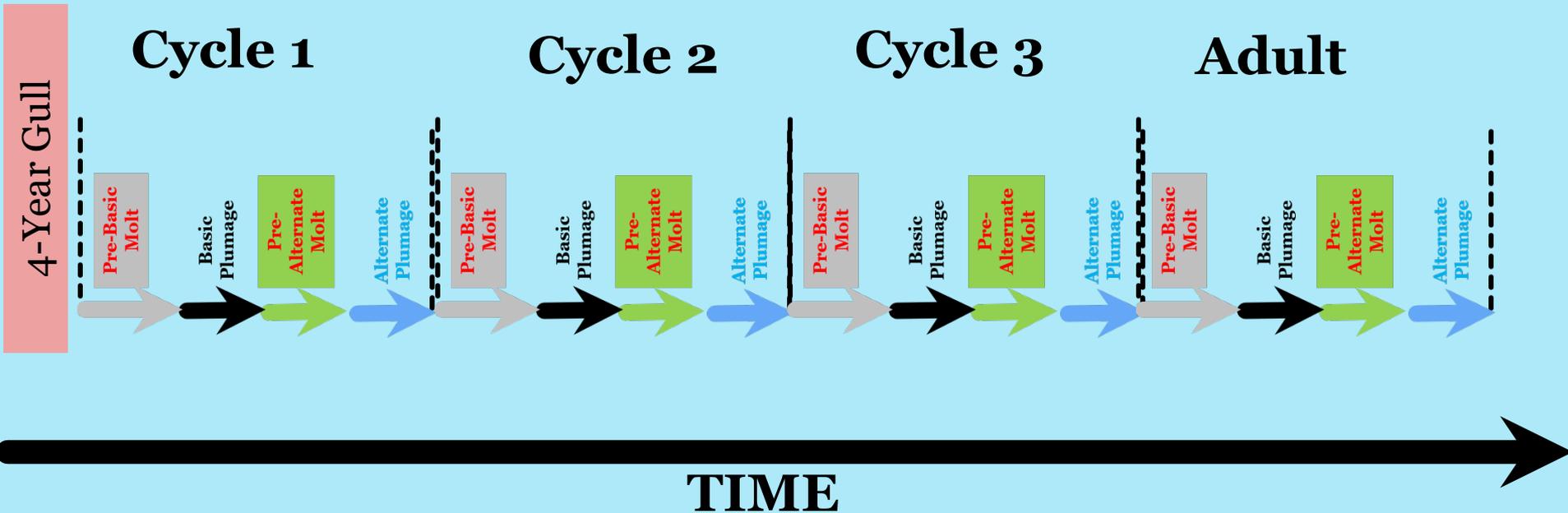


# AGING GULLS

- ▶ 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. Many species have “apical spots” or other white markings on the primaries, which are often absent in young gulls.

# 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**

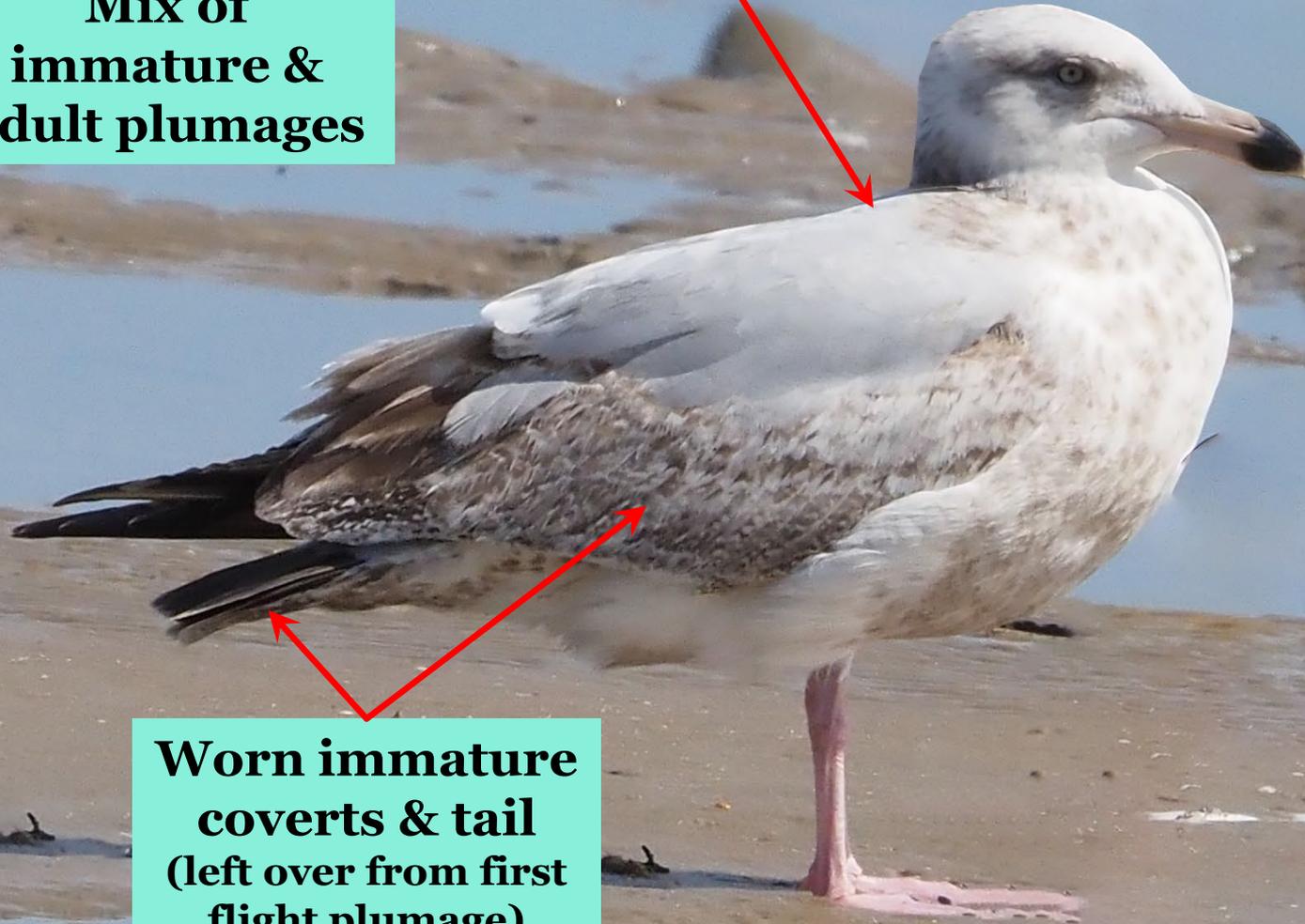
**Often a tail-band**

# 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**

**Primary tips  
rounder**

**White spots  
on primaries**

**Underparts – white**

Juvenile



# Mantle & scapulars (Herring)

1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Adult



3<sup>rd</sup> cycle



2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



# Primary Tips (Herring)



Juvenile



1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Adult

3<sup>rd</sup> cycle

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle



# Bill & Eye (Herring)



Juvenile



1<sup>st</sup> cycle



Adult



3<sup>rd</sup> cycle



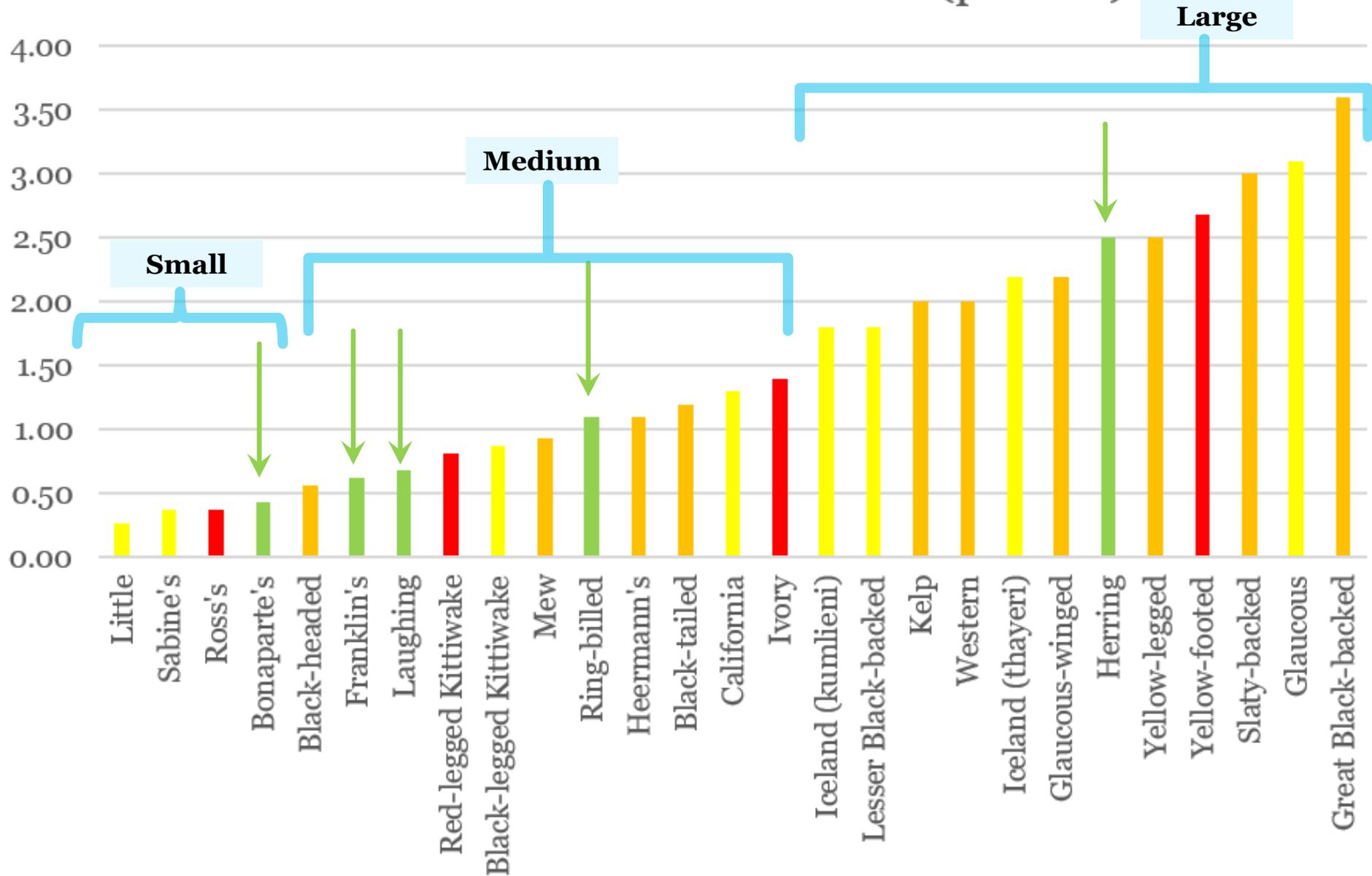
2<sup>nd</sup> cycle

# 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)



# 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.

Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# 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**

					
<b>Heerman's</b>	<b>Kelp</b>	<b>Great Black-backed</b>	<b>Lesser Black-backed</b>	<b>Yellow-footed</b>	<b>Western</b>

**Dark-backed Gulls**

**Medium-Dark-backed Gulls**

						
<b>Laughing</b>	<b>Black-tailed</b>	<b>Franklin's</b>	<b>Sabine's</b>	<b>Slaty-backed</b>	<b>Red-legged Kittiwake</b>	<b>Yellow-legged</b>

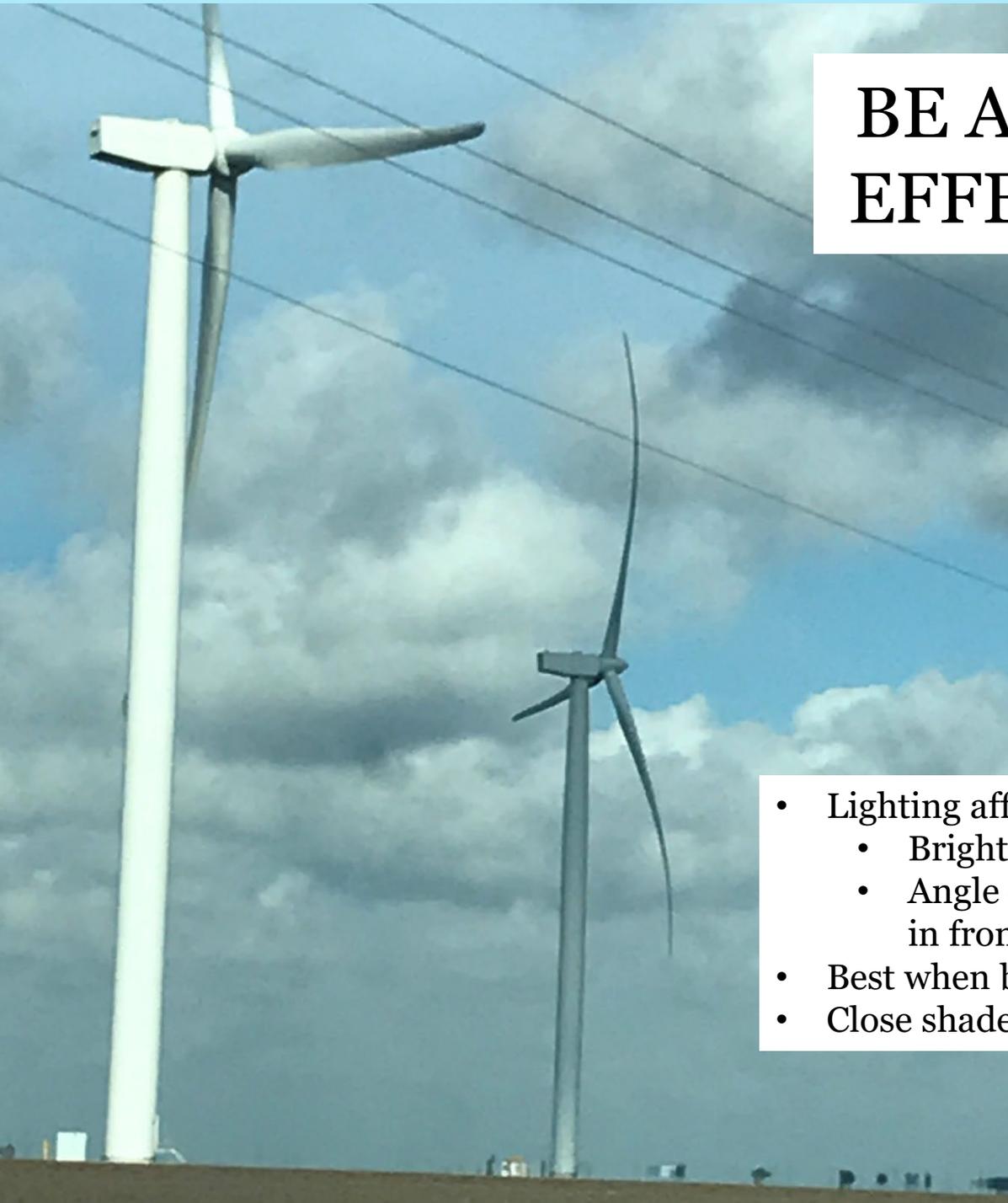
**Medium-backed Gulls**

						
<b>Black-legged Kittiwake</b>	<b>Short-billed</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>California</b>	<b>Bonaparte's</b>	<b>Iceland</b>	<b>Glaucous-winged</b>

Paintings by David A. Sibley

**Pale-backed Gulls**

					
<b>Ring-billed</b>	<b>Herring</b>	<b>Black-headed</b>	<b>Ross's</b>	<b>Glaucous</b>	<b>Ivory</b>



# 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\*\*

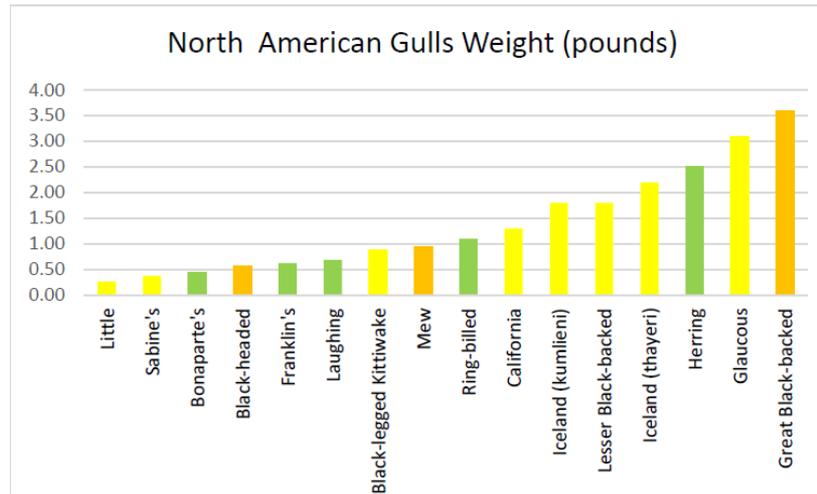
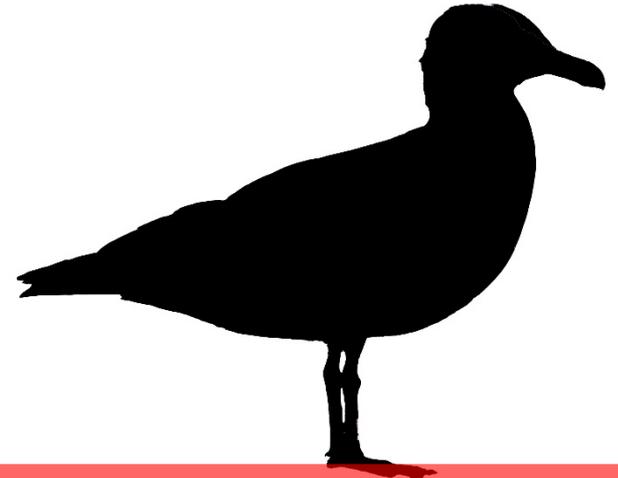
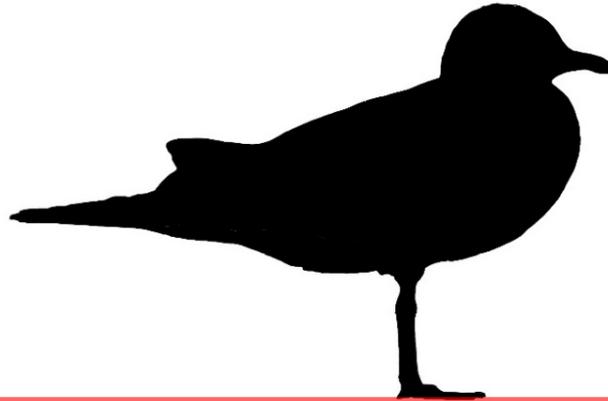
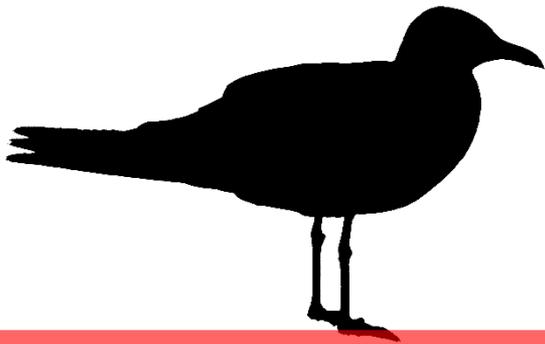
- ▶ Get to know the structure and plumages of **Ring-billed**.
- ▶ It is the most common gull inland during the winter gulling season and is also present on the coast in lower numbers.
- ▶ The **Ring-billed** represents the “standard gull” for many of the structural characteristics: size, build, leg 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”

Average  
head size

Medium bill  
(thickness &  
length)

Average build,  
balanced,  
well-proportioned

Proportionately  
slightly  
long-ish wings

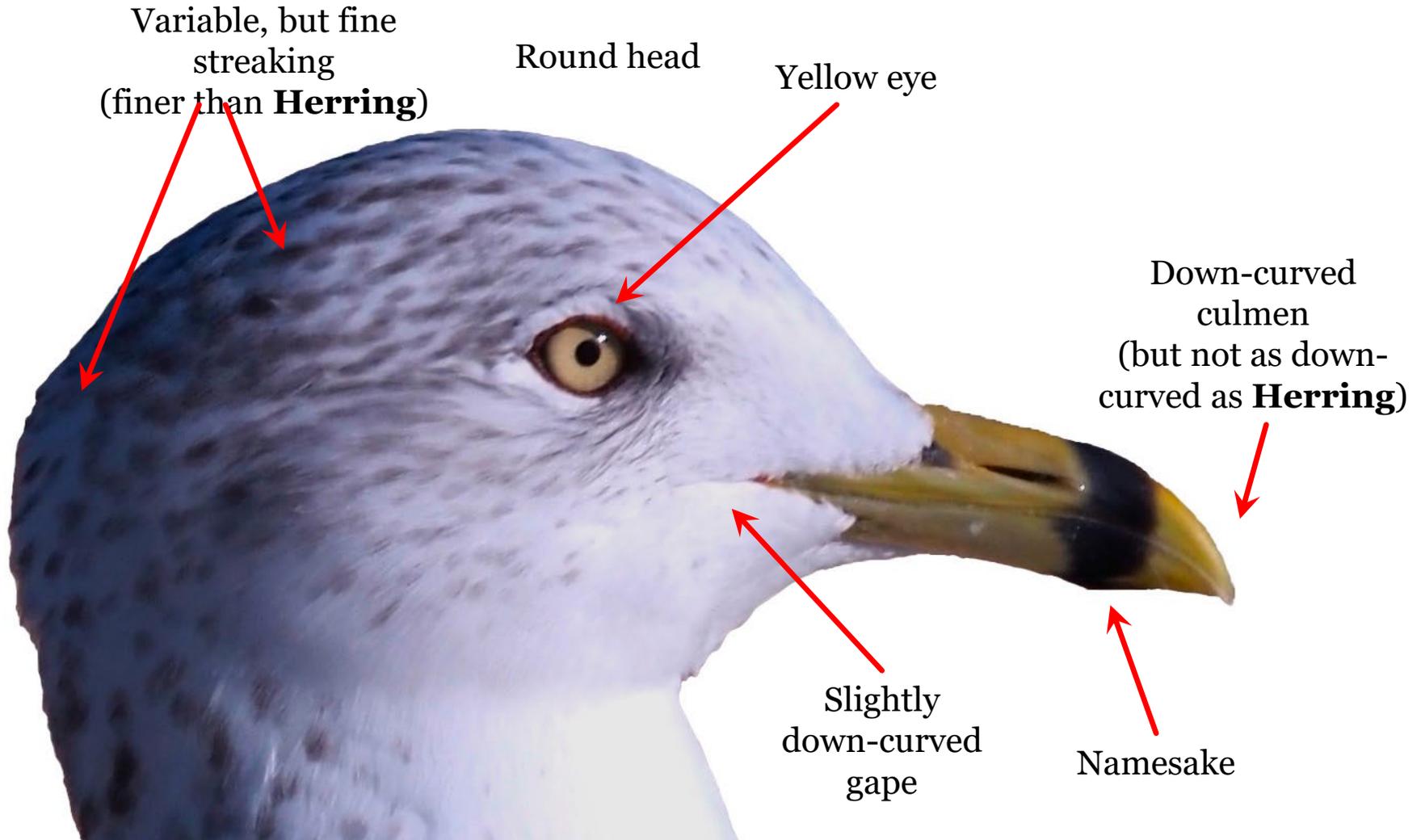
Chest & belly  
neither bulky  
nor lanky

Neither long  
nor short

Yellow legs  
Positioned in middle

# HEAD & BILL

## RING-BILLED – ADULT NONBREEDING



**Juvenile**



# AGING RING-BILLED A 3-YEAR GULL

**Sub-adult**



**Adult**



# LAUGHING

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

### GULF COAST

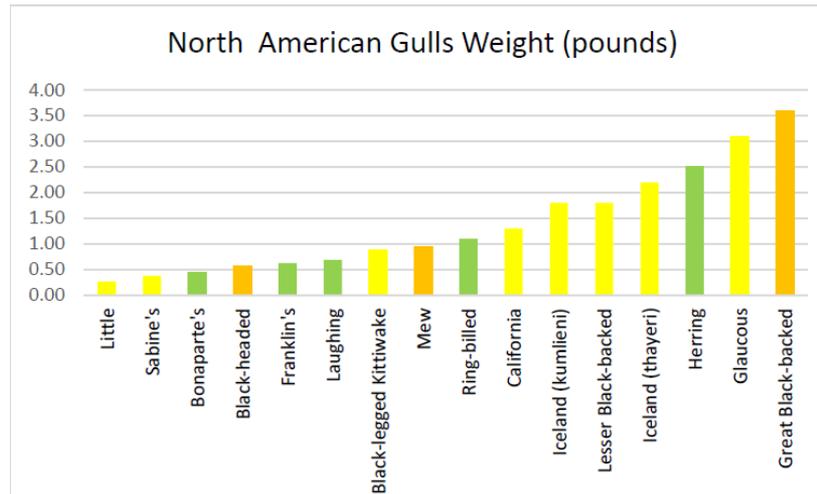
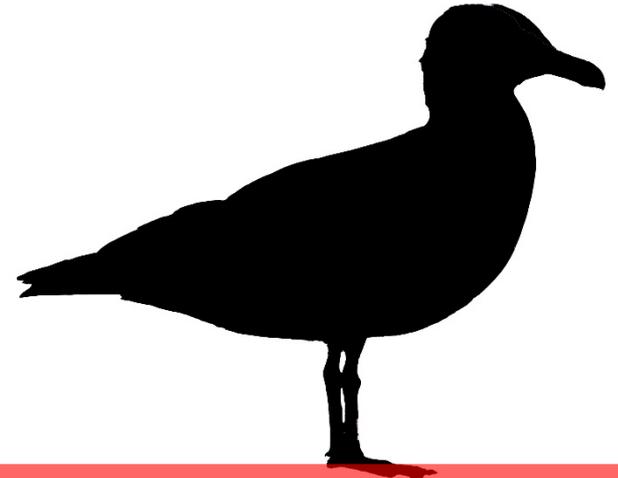
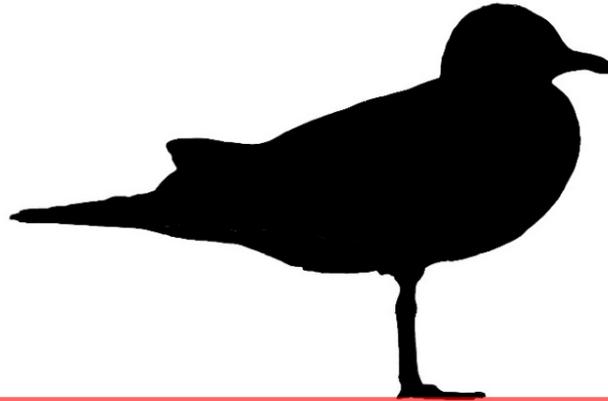
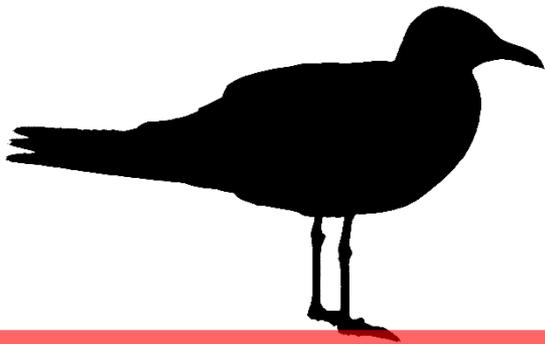
- ▶ **Laughing Gulls** are ubiquitous on the Gulf and East Coasts.
- ▶ They are characterized by their long, pointy wings with black outer undersides, long legs, small heads, and droopy black, or during the breeding season, red bills.
- ▶ The extensive black on the underside of the pointy wings gradually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

# SIZE COMPARISON

Laughing

Ring-billed

Herring



# STRUCTURE

## LAUGHING ADULT BREEDING

Black hood

Long, slender, droopy bill

Broken  
white  
Eye-ring

Charcoal  
gray back

Wings extend  
well beyond  
tail

Pointed  
wing-tips

Gleaming  
white  
undersides

Slender, tapered,  
long-winged profile

Long  
legged,  
lanky

Black wingtips,  
inconspicuous  
to obvious  
white spots  
(variable)

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

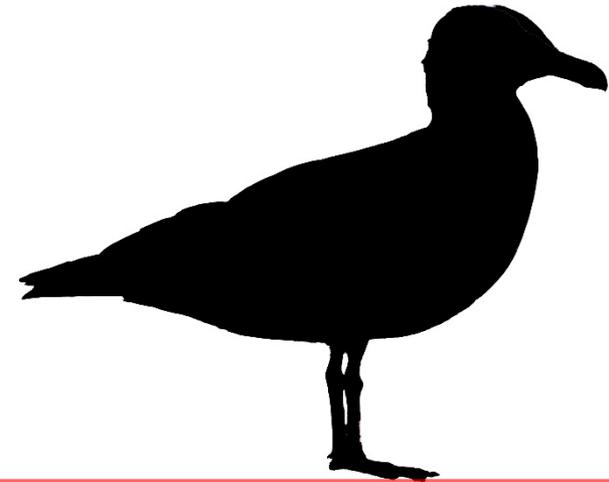
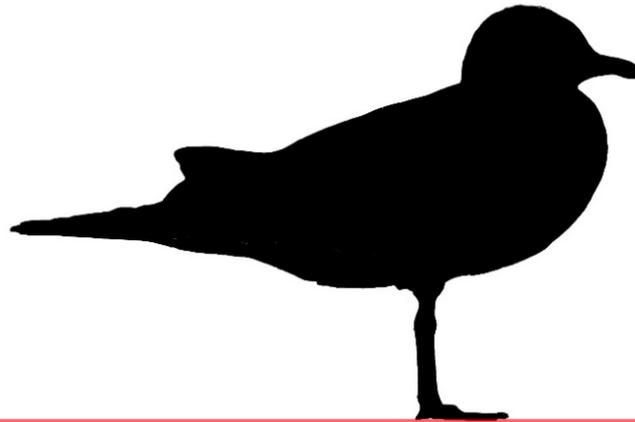
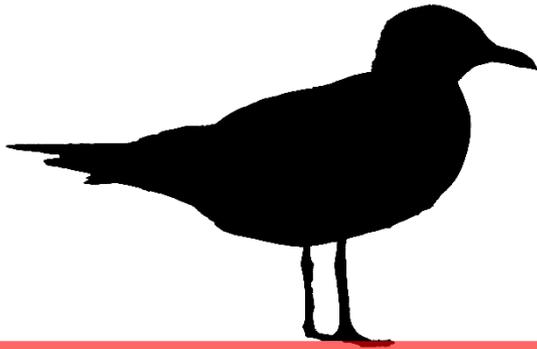
- ▶ Although a few are seen in winter and summer, for the most part **Franklin's** are migrants in Texas. Often seen overhead in loose follow-the-leader flocks in April & October.
- ▶ Note the call and the white-black-gray pattern of the wing-tips for overhead birds.
- ▶ Due to their hooded, or partially 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

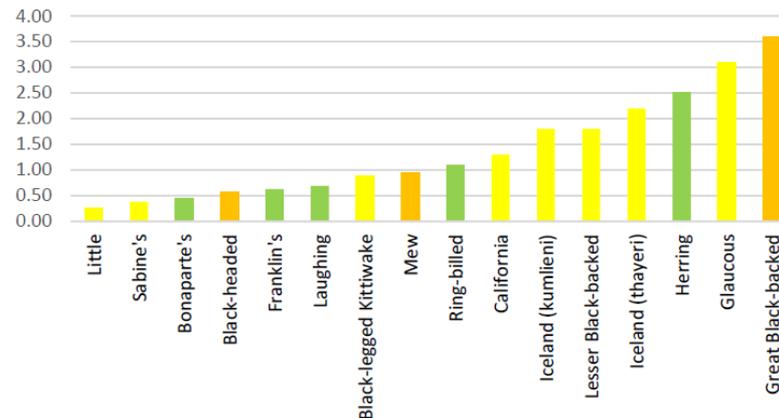
Franklin's

Ring-billed

Herring

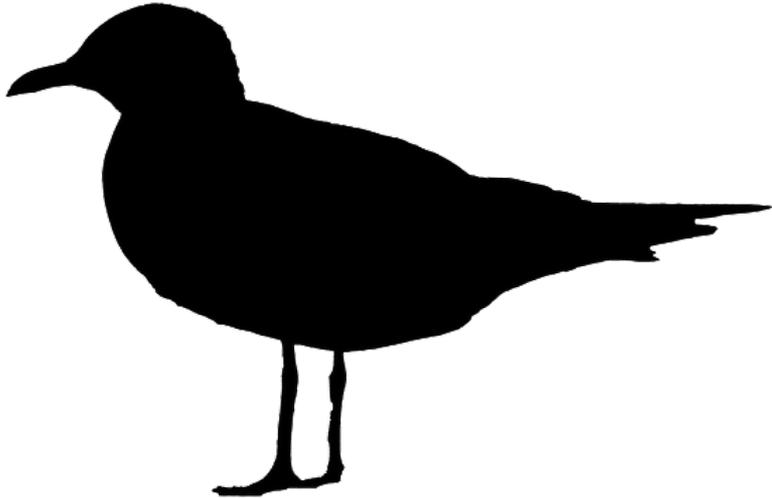


North American Gulls Weight (pounds)



# FRANKLIN'S VS LAUGHING

**Franklin's**



**Laughing**



# FRANKLIN'S VS LAUGHING

**Franklin's**

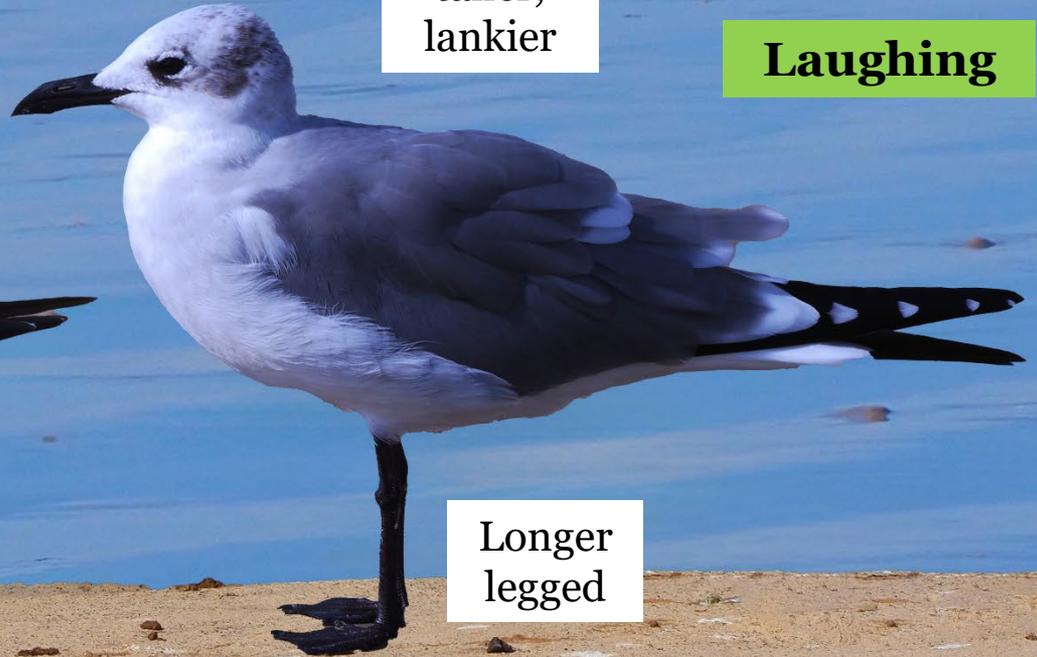
Shorter-  
billed



More  
compact

Larger,  
taller,  
lankier

**Laughing**



Longer  
legged

# FRANKLIN'S ADULT BREEDING

Similar charcoal gray  
back

More prominent eye-arcs  
Often almost join in the back

Large white spots  
(variable)

Shorter, straighter  
bill

More compact build

**Laughing**

More frequently  
pinkish  
in peak breeding

Broader white  
tertials

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**

Shorter legs

Shorter,  
rounder  
wingtips

Less attenuated

White

Black

White

Long, pointy wings

Extensive black

Broader & rounder wings

Gradual transition



Franklin's



Laughing

# FRANKLIN'S VS LAUGHING

# HERRING

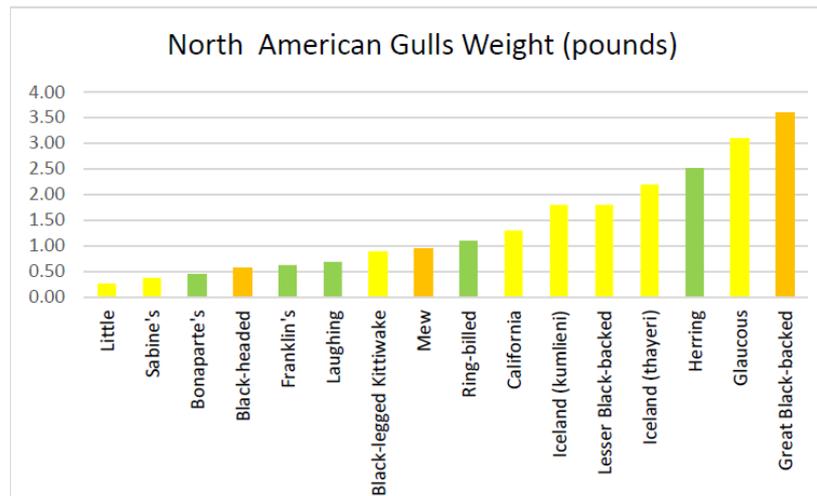
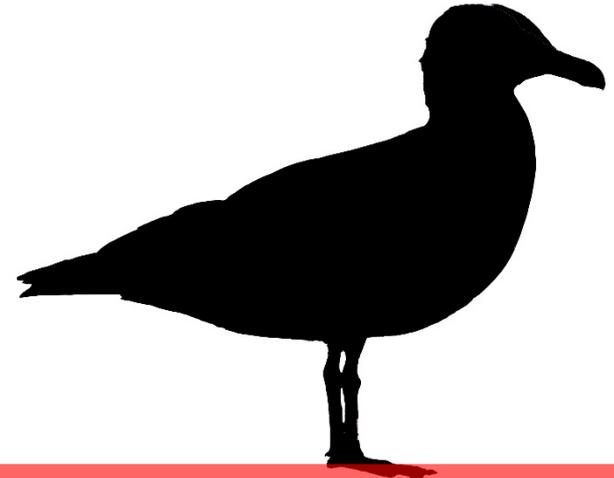
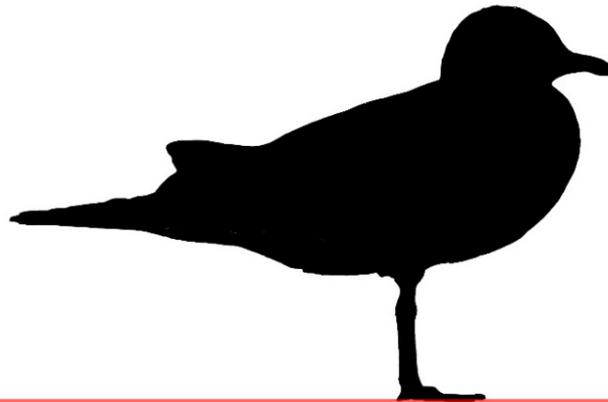
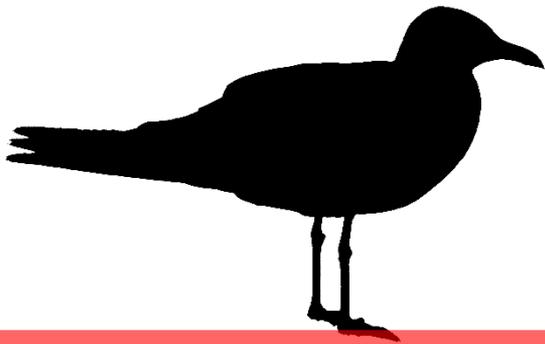
- ▶ **Herring** are by far the most common large white-headed gull.
- ▶ They vary in size and build, but should be considered the default pink-legged, large gull in Texas. They are distinctly larger than all the other common gulls.
- ▶ Their structure is variable, but generally more bulky in the belly 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

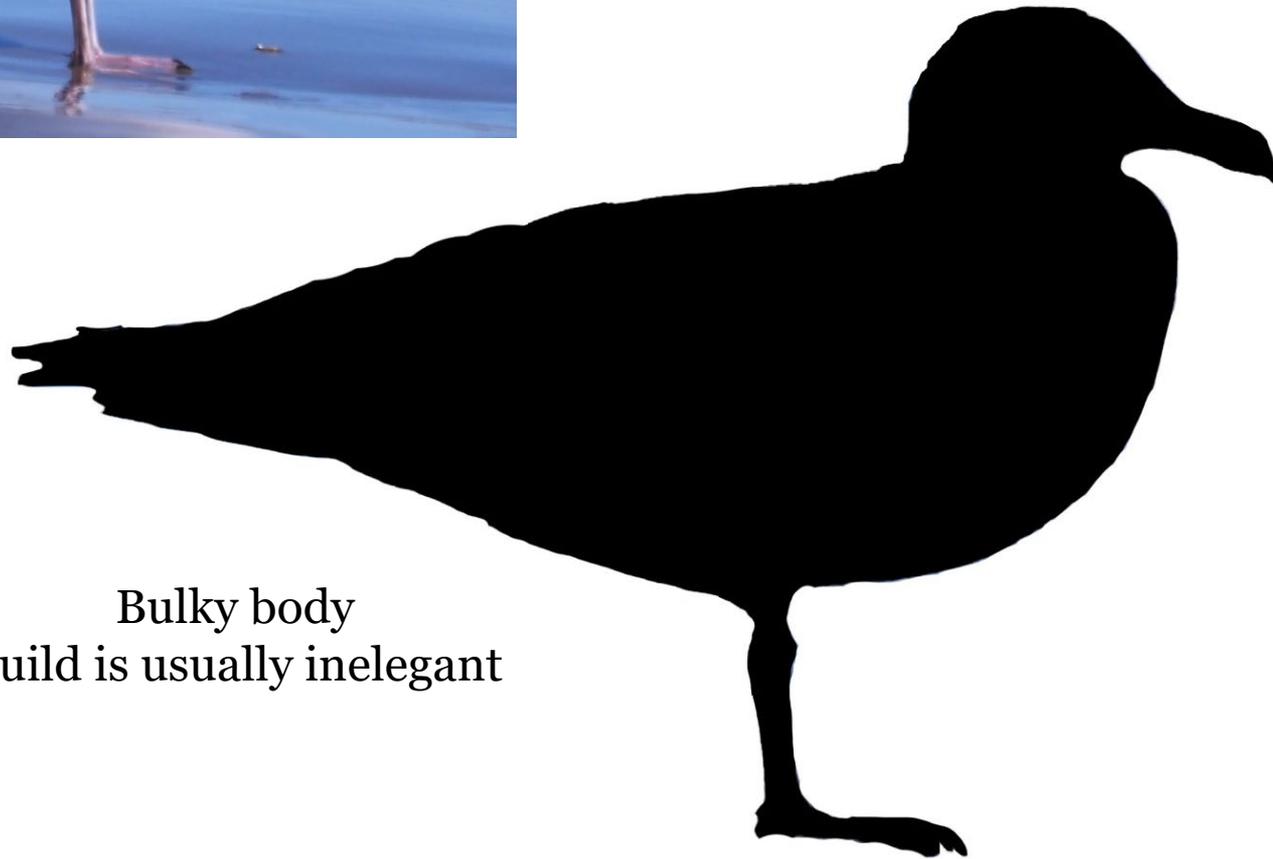


Pink legs

**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

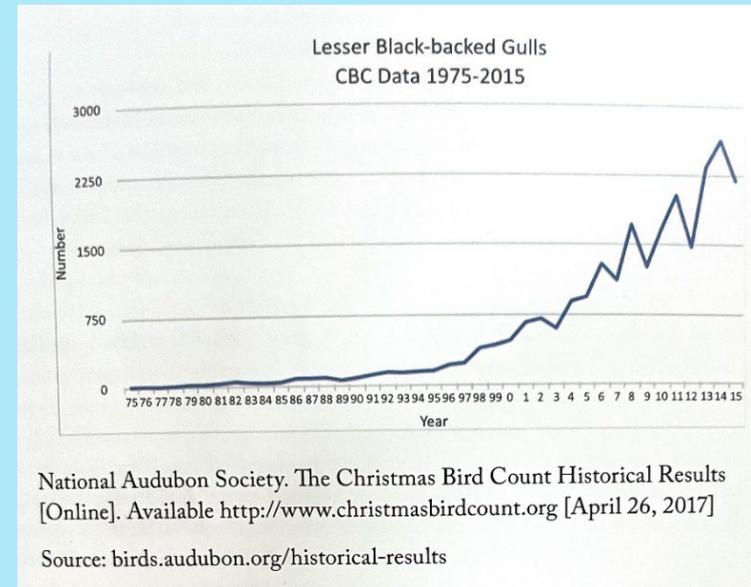


# LBBG

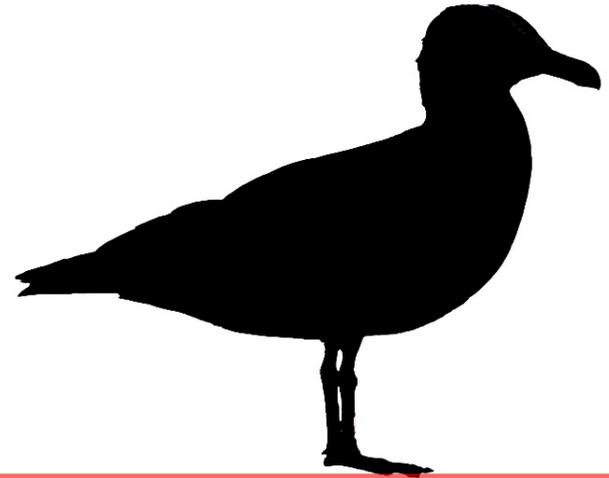
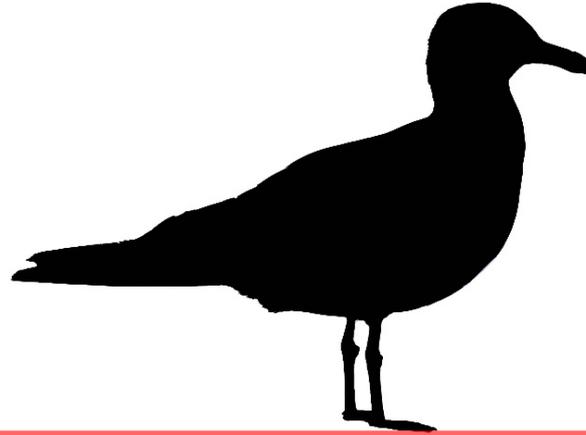
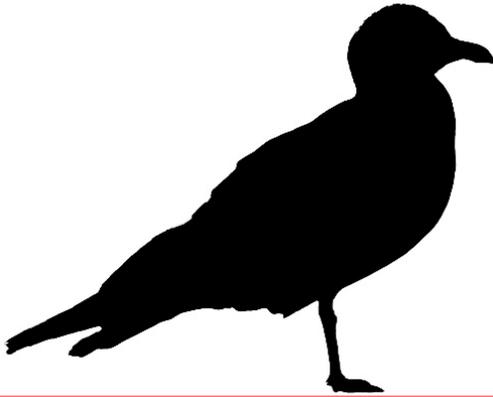
- ▶ The **Lesser Black-backed** has established a strong winter presence in North America and Texas over the last 25 years or so. It hatches primarily in Europe, Iceland and Greenland, but wanders to Texas in increasing numbers.
- ▶ Its characteristics should be compared to the **Herring** and **Ring-billed** 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



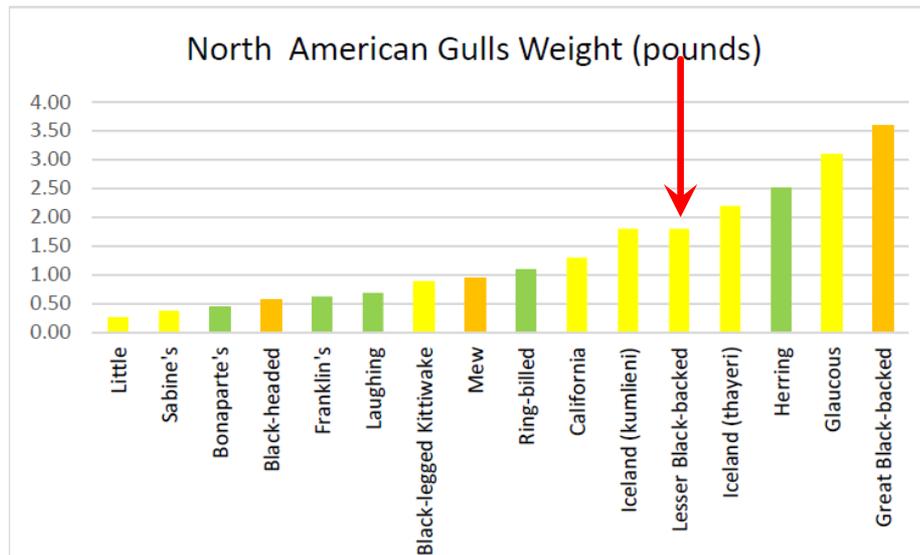
# SIZE COMPARISON



**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.

LBBG



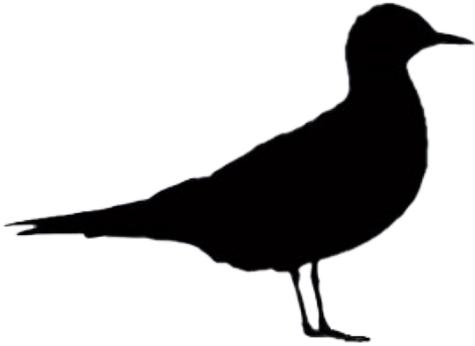
Yellow eye, slim head and  
“punched in eye” often  
results in a fierce look

# BONAPARTE'S

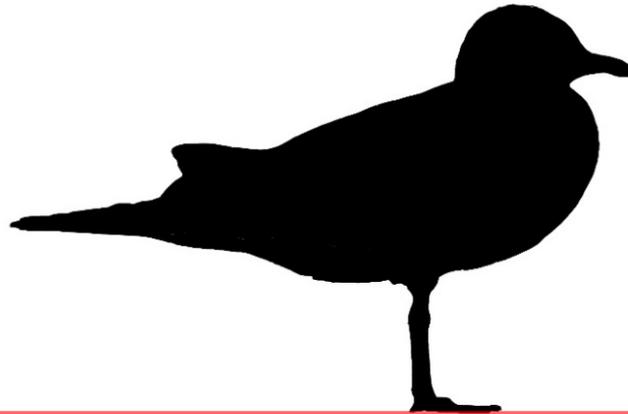
- ▶ The smallest of the Texas Hex, the **Bonaparte's** is usually seen snatching food items from the surface of lakes and the Gulf shores in the Texas winter.
- ▶ With practice it can be identified from a distance by its buoyant flight style, delicate structure and habit of picking food items from the 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

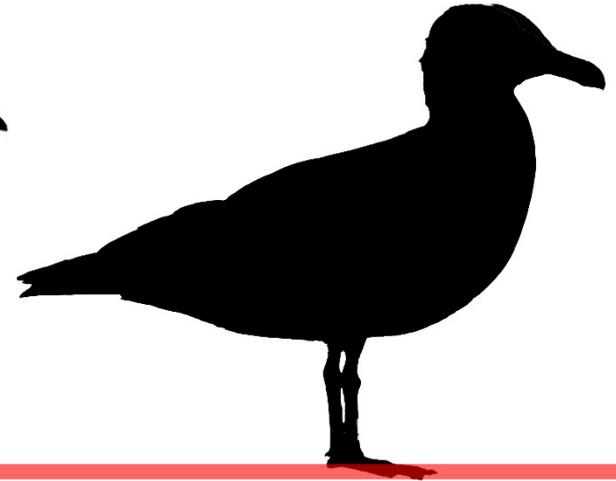
**Bonaparte's**



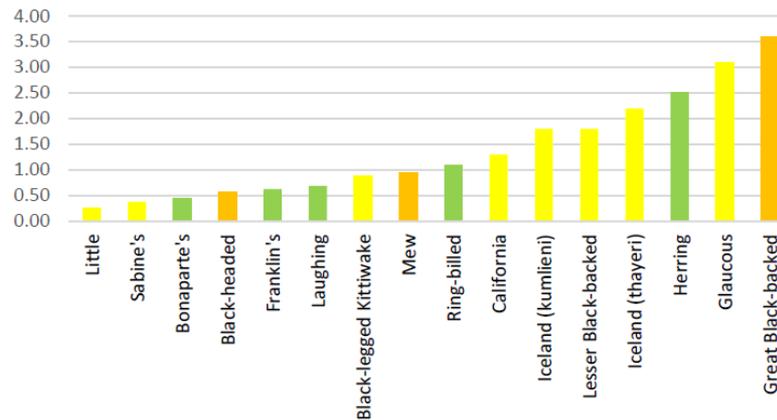
**Ring-billed**



**Herring**



North American Gulls Weight (pounds)



# WHY IS THIS NOT A RING-BILLED?

Smaller

Taller head

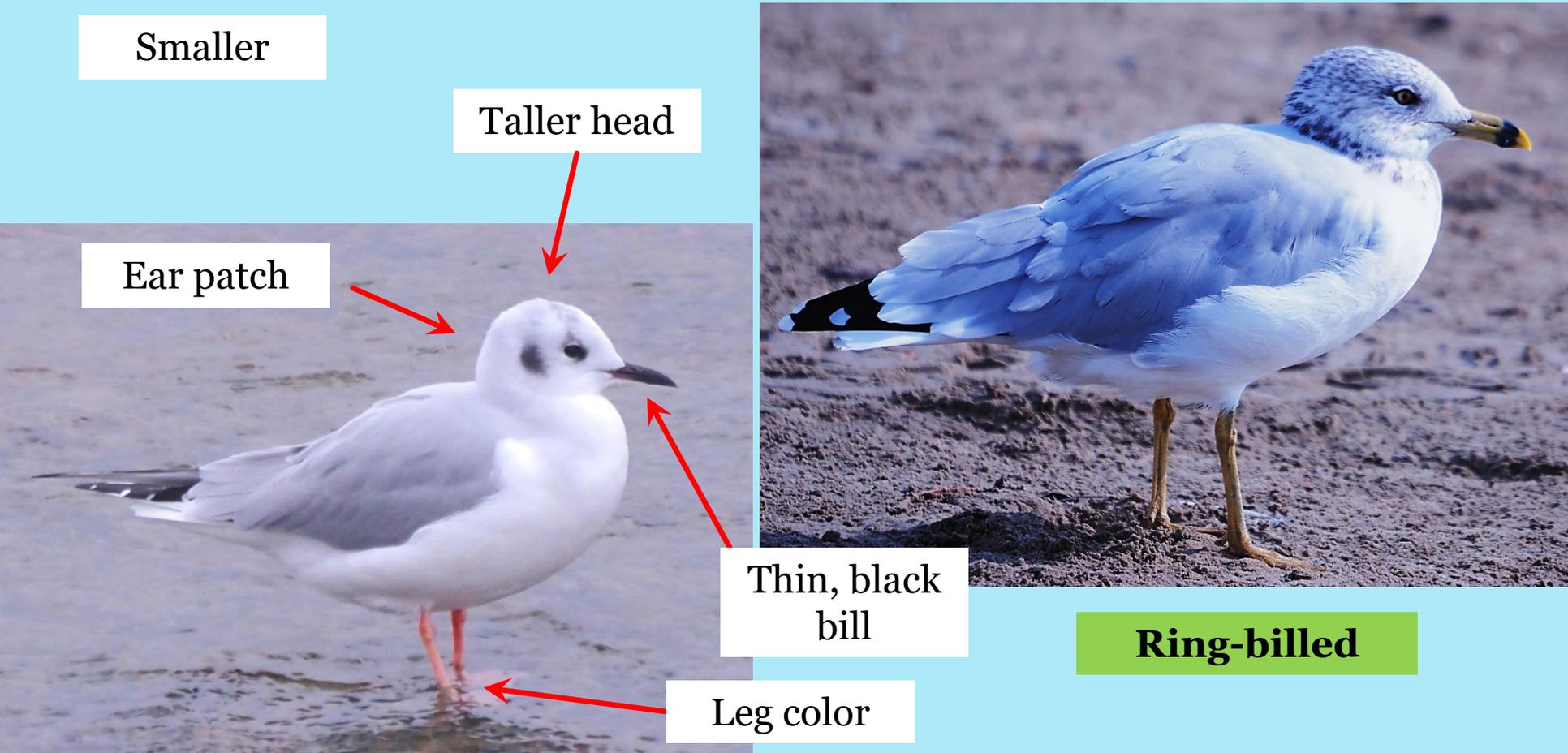
Ear patch

Thin, black  
bill

Leg color

Ring-billed

Bonaparte's

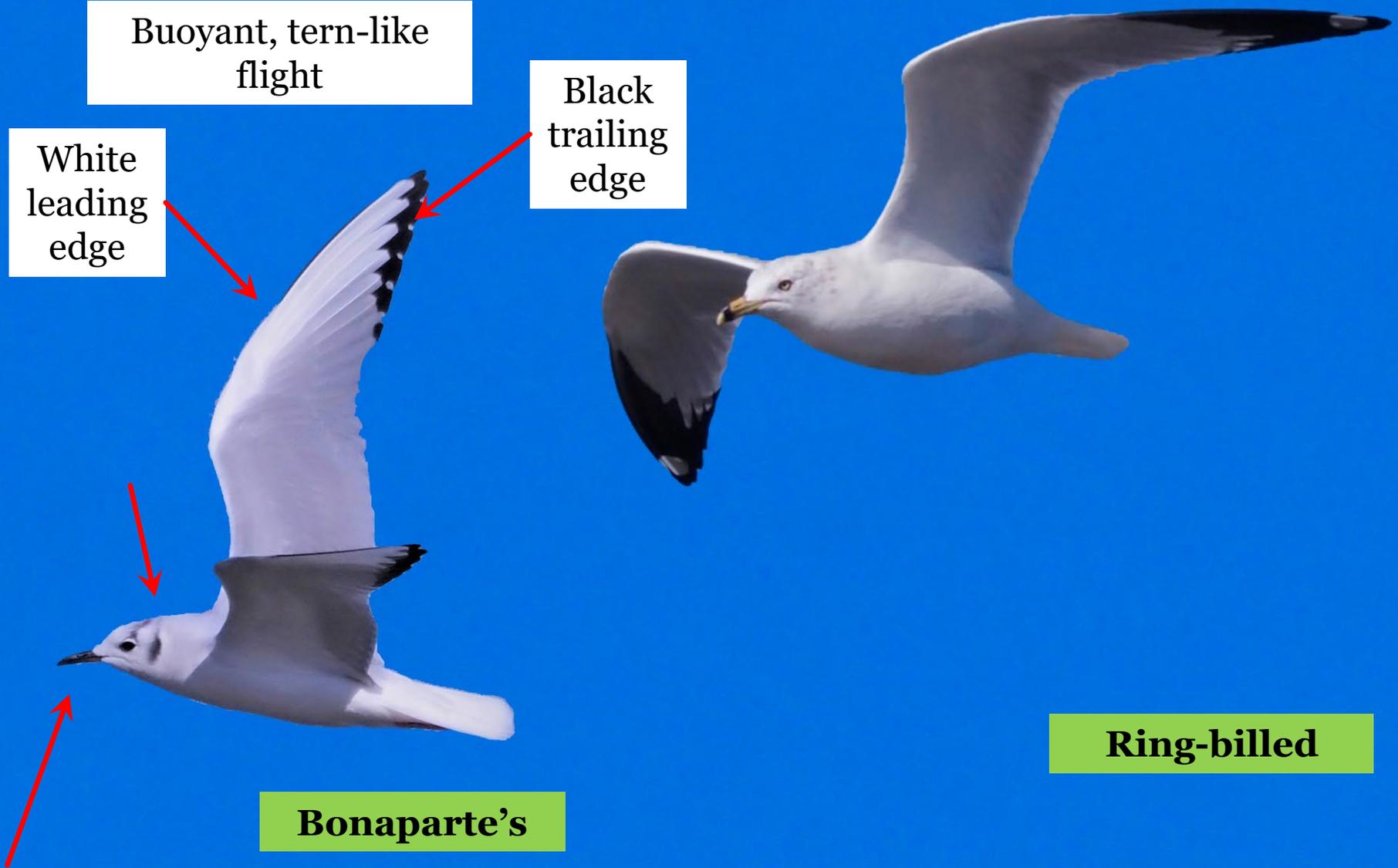


# WHY IS THIS NOT A RING-BILLED?

Buoyant, tern-like flight

White leading edge

Black trailing edge



**Bonaparte's**

**Ring-billed**

# AGING RING-BILLED A 3-YEAR GULL



**Sub-adult**

**Adult**



# 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

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

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



Ring-billed



Herring

## Pale-backed Gulls



Reference bird



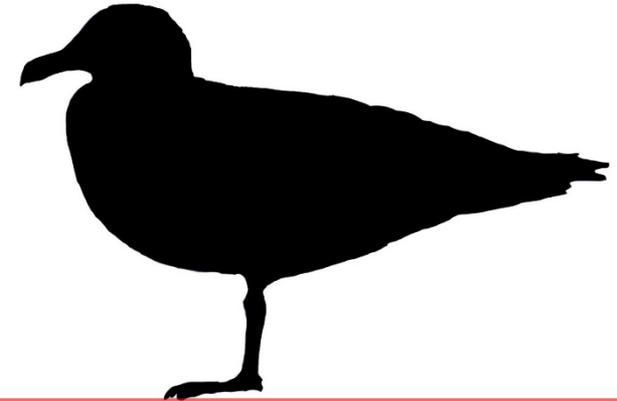
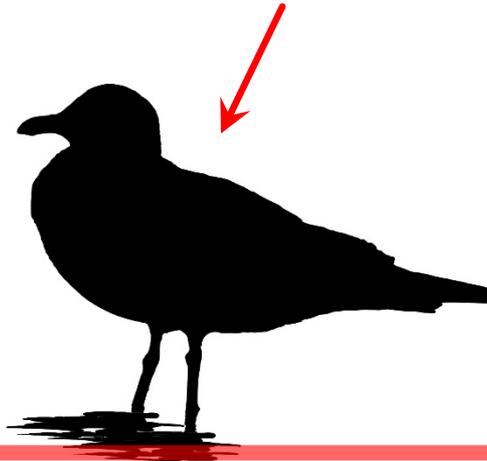
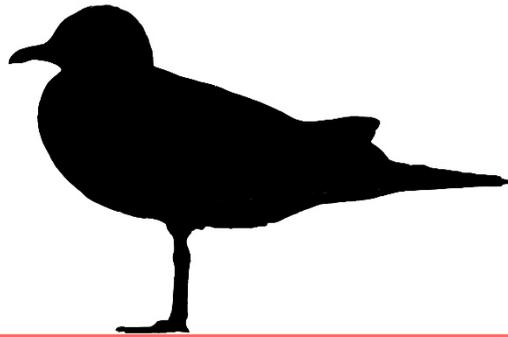
Glaucous

**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.
- ▶ 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.
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- ▶ 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.

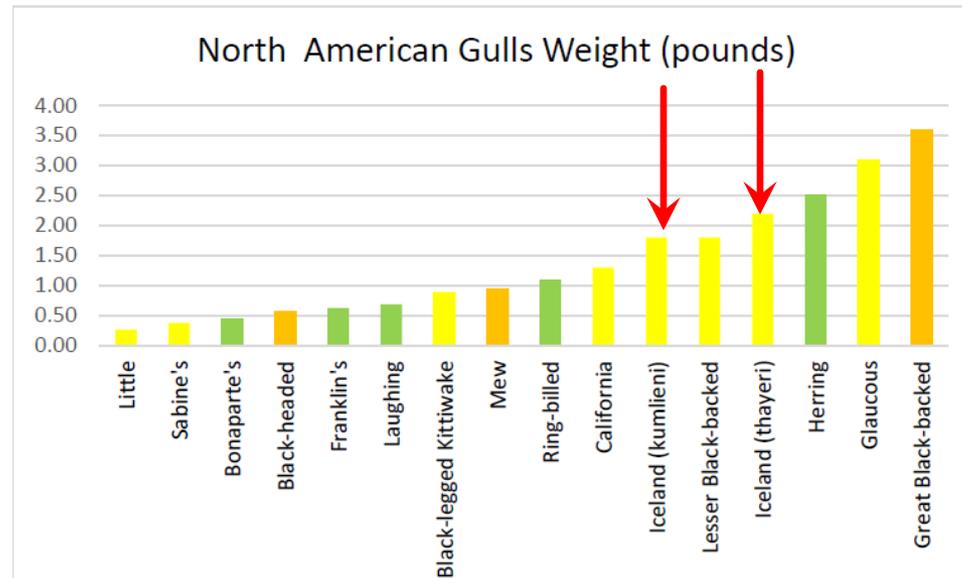
# SIZE COMPARISON



**Ring-billed**

**Iceland**

**Herring**



# ICELAND VS HERRING



**Herring**

**Iceland**



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

# ICELAND (*THAYERI*)

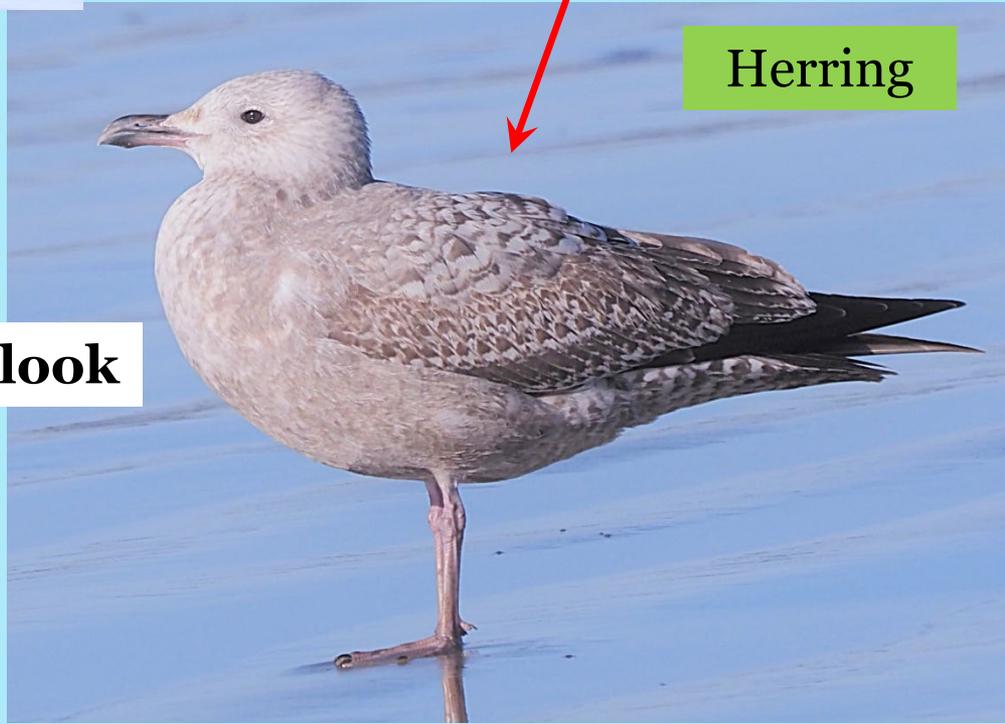
Juvenile scapulars  
(same age as coverts)



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



**Iceland  
(*thayeri*)**



**Herring**

**2-toned look**

# HEAD & BILL

ICELAND  
(*THAYERI*)



ICELAND  
(*THAYERI*)



Herring



A white seagull with brown spots on its wings is captured in flight over a body of blue water. The bird is positioned in the center-left of the frame, with its wings spread wide. The background shows the texture of the water and some white foam from a wave.

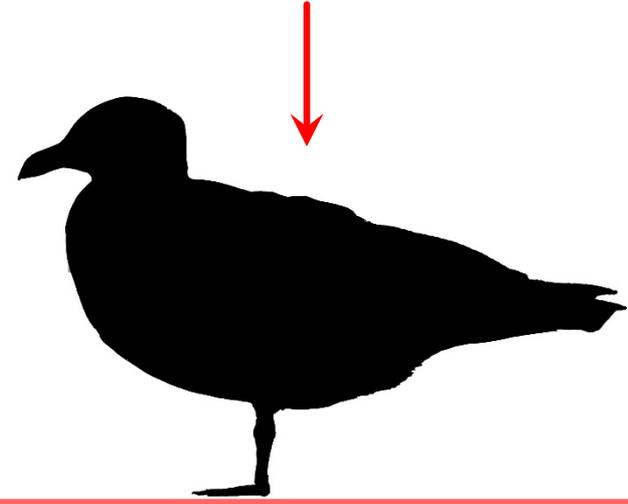
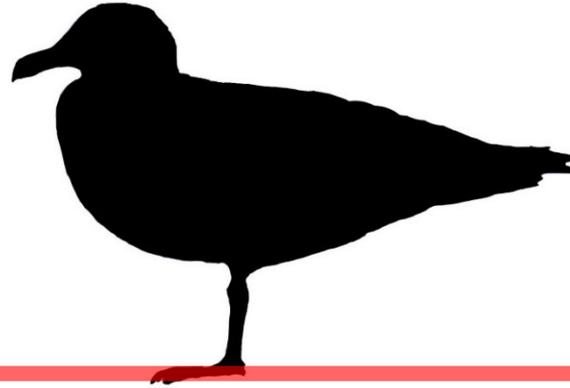
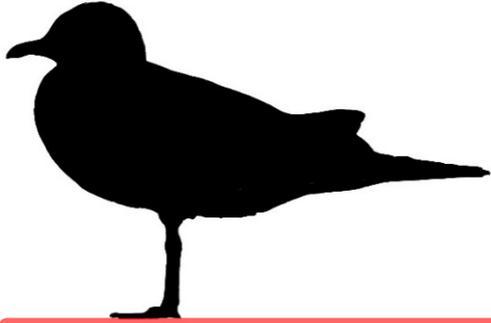
# ICELAND (*KUMLIENI*)

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

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**GLAUCOUS**

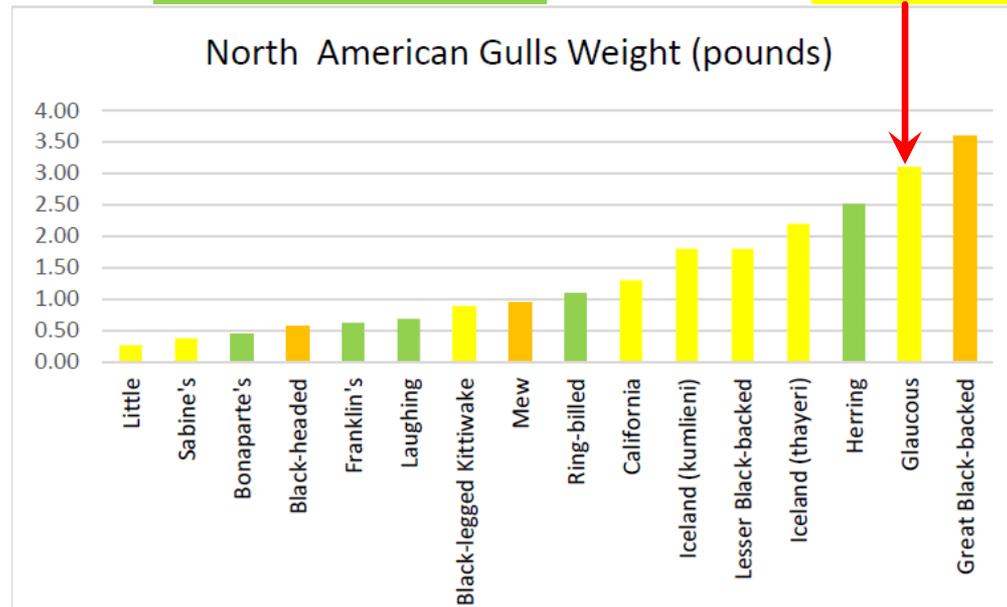
# SIZE COMPARISON



**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**

**Larger than Herring**

**Big head,  
thick neck,  
robust proportions**

**Short  
primary  
projection**

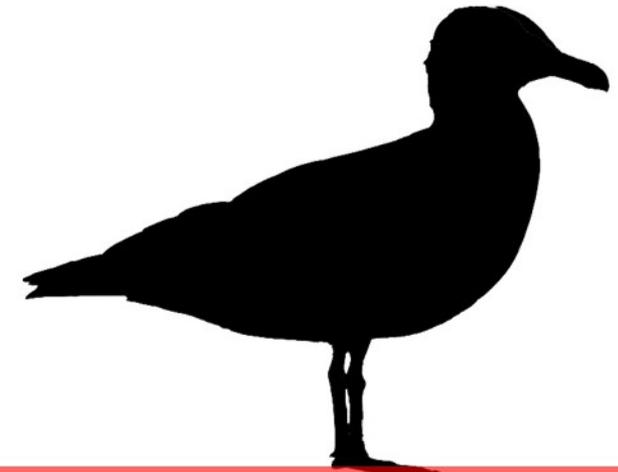
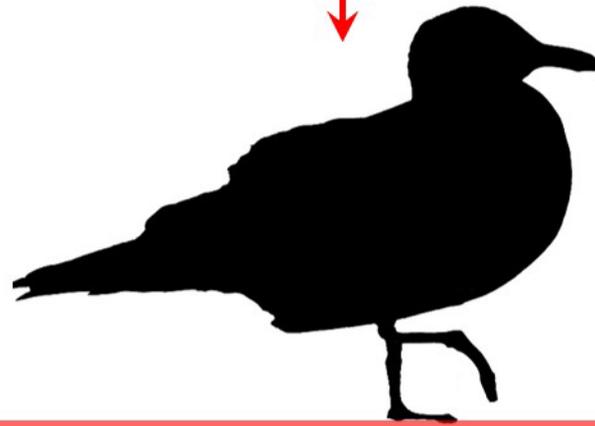
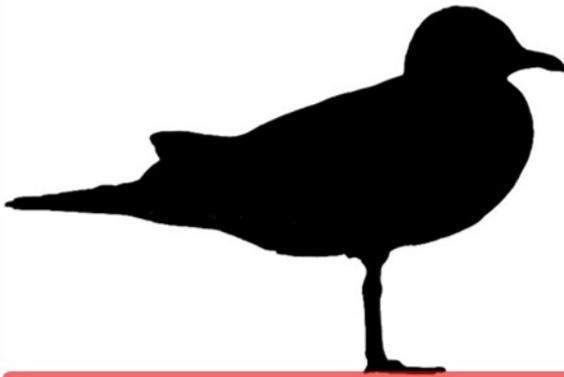
**CALIFORNIA**

# SIZE COMPARISON

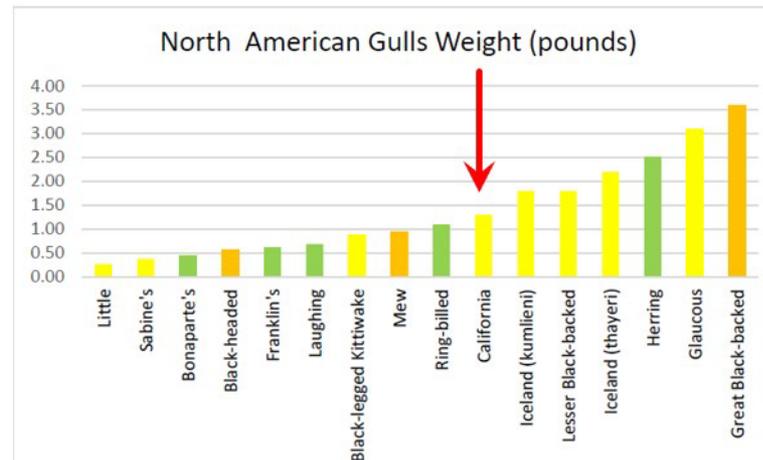
Ring-billed

California

Herring



Larger than  
Ring-billed  
Smaller than  
Herring

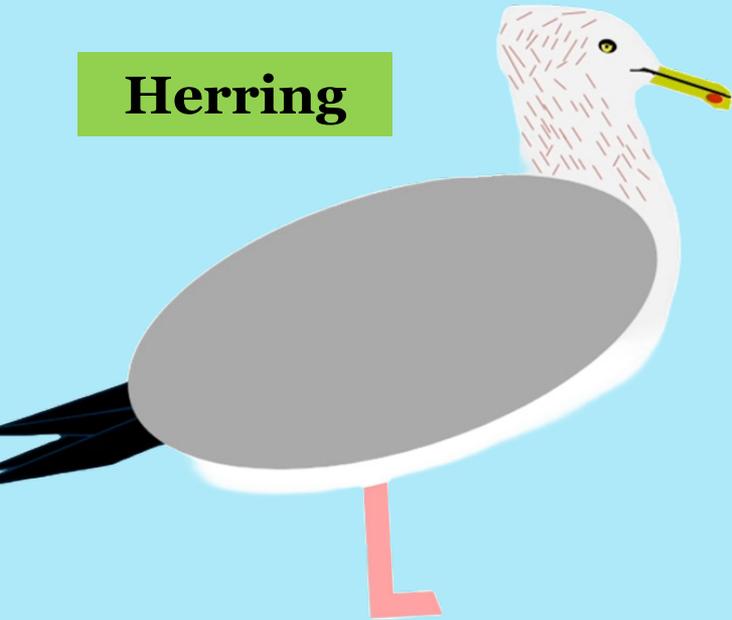


Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# HERRING VS CALIFORNIA



**Herring**



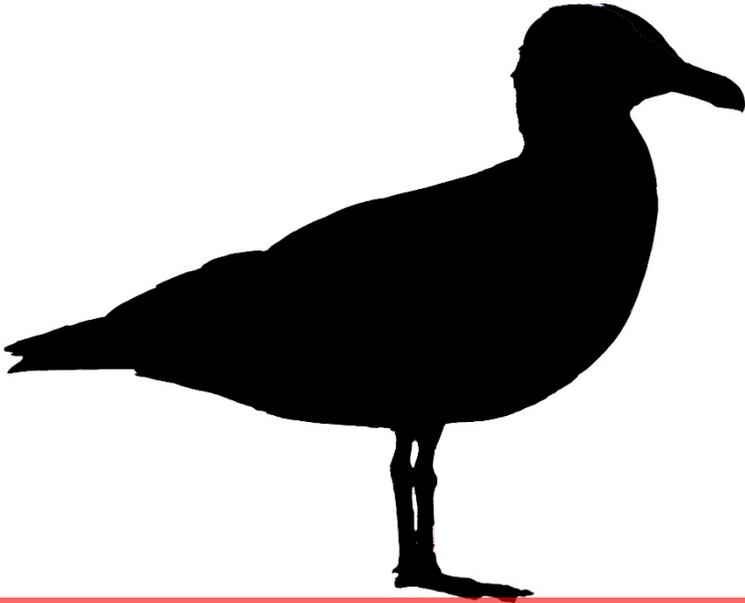
**California**



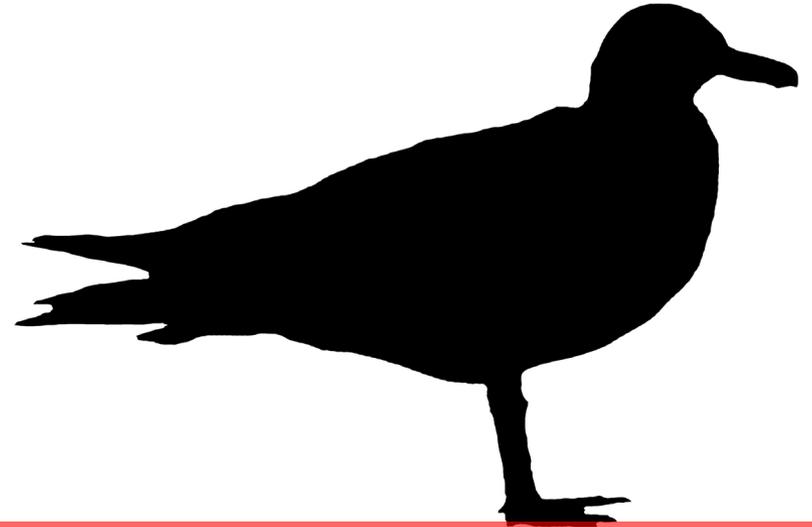
Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# STRUCTURE

Fairly long,  
parallel-sided  
bill



**Herring**



**California**

**Between Herring &  
Ring-billed size**

# California



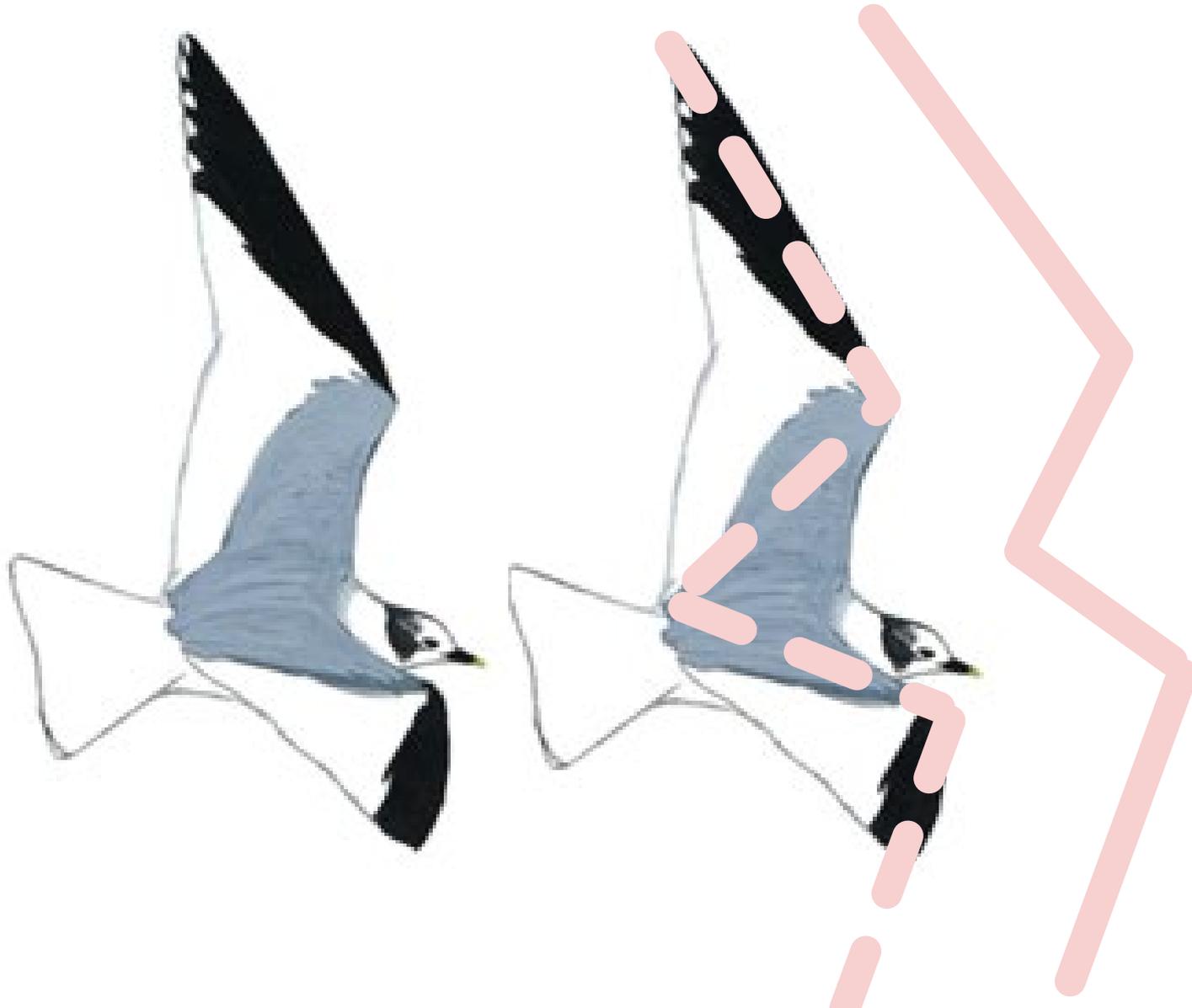
**Dark eye**

**Fairly long,  
parallel-sided bill**

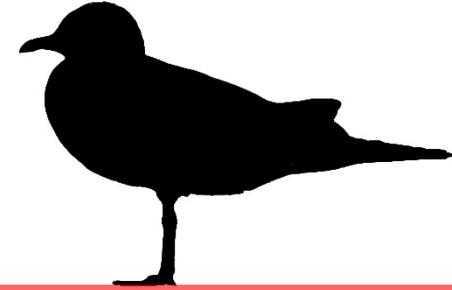
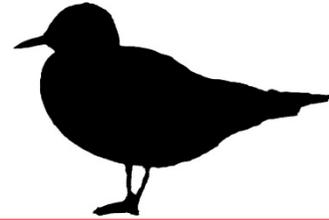
**Black & red  
marks on bill**

**SABINE'S**

# ID GROUP: THE “M-BIRDS”



# SIZE COMPARISON

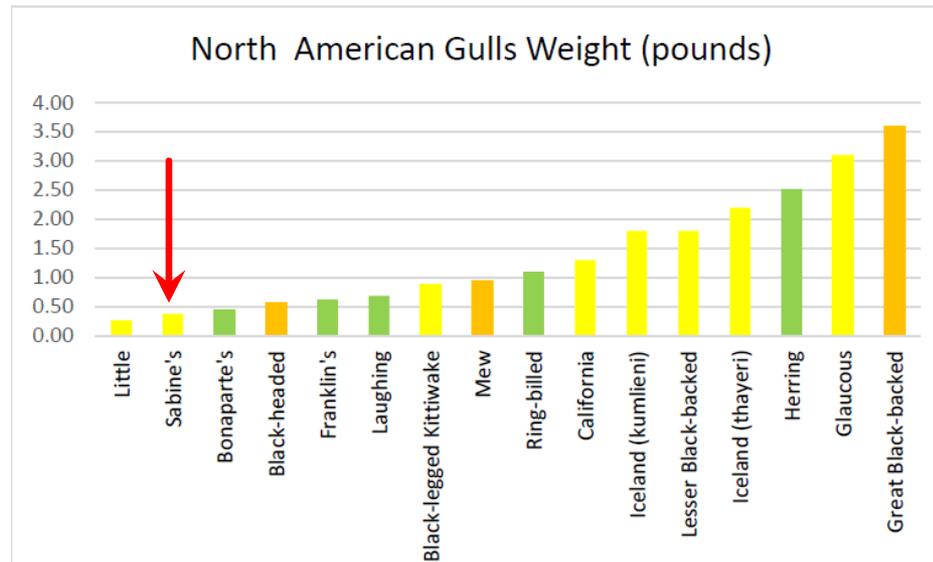


**Little**

**Sabine's**

**Bonaparte's**

**Ring-billed**



# SIZE COMPARISON

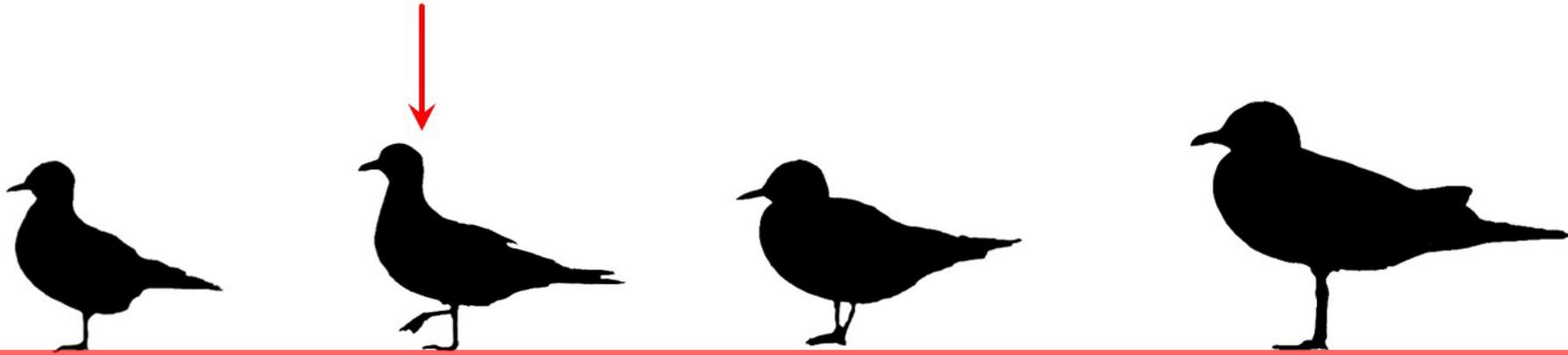


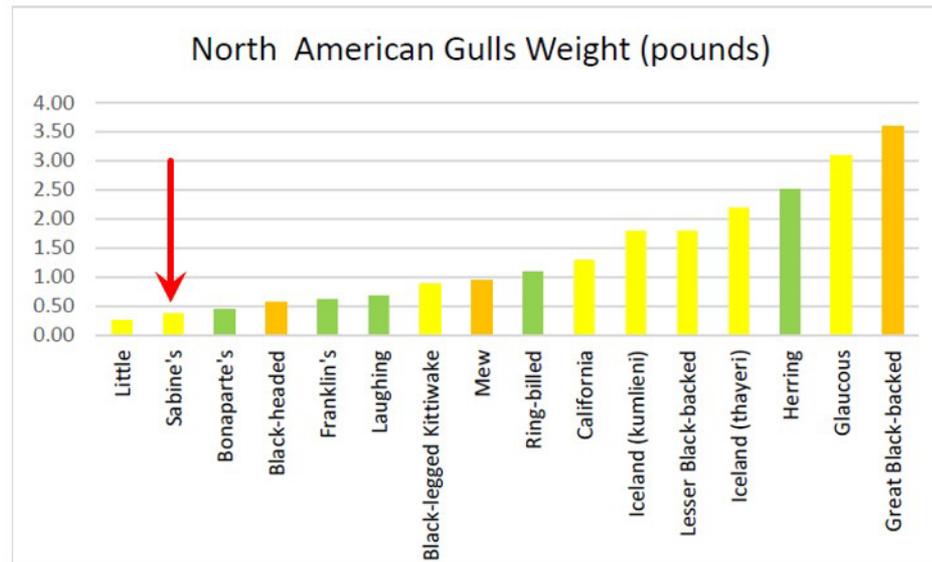
Photo by Lance Felber

**Little**

**Sabine's**

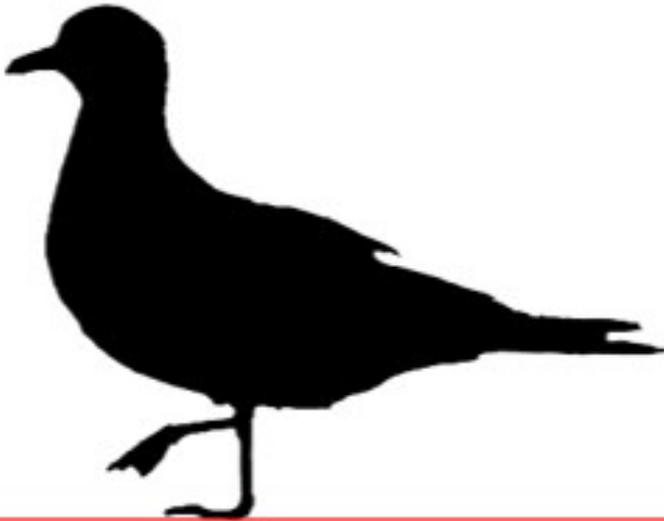
**Bonaparte's**

**Ring-billed**



Other Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

# STRUCTURE



**Sabine's**

Photo by Lance Felber



**Bonaparte's**

Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



# SABINE'S JUVENILE HORNSBY BEND (SEPT 2016)

Long neck  
with gray sides

High “keel” in back



# **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**

# LAKE BALMORHEA NOVEMBER 2021

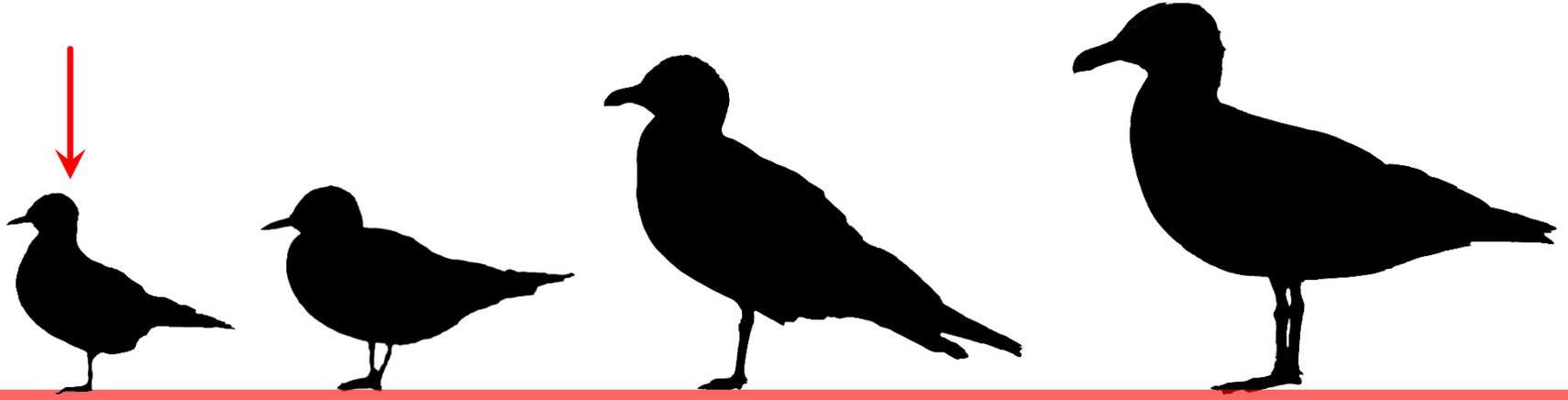
**Black-legged  
Kittiwake**



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson

**LITTLE**

# SIZE COMPARISON

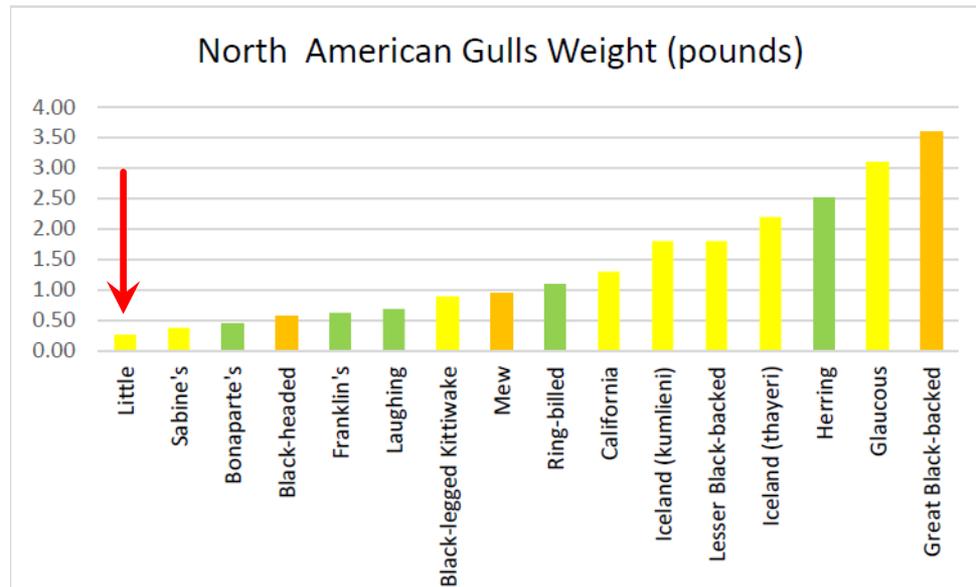


**Little**

**Bonaparte's**

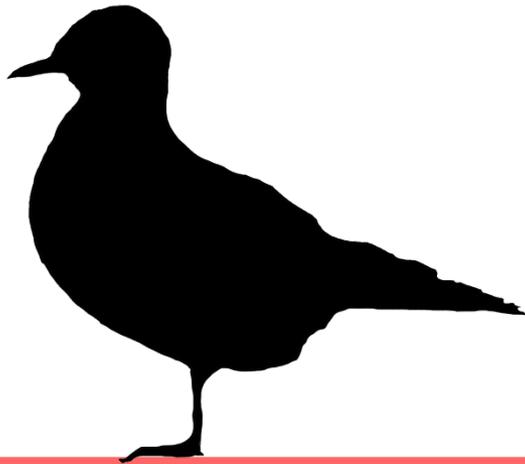
**Ring-billed**

**Herring**



# STRUCTURE

**Little**



**Bonaparte's**

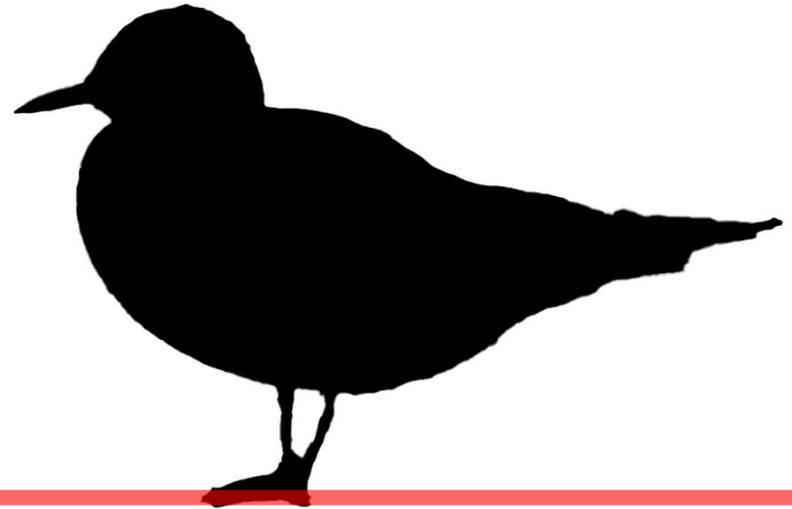




Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Photo by Jeffrey E. Patterson