GULLS CHECKLIST
GULLS OF NORTH AMERICA
THE TEXAS Hex (10/1/26)

ADULT GULLS CHECKLIST (The Texas Hex)			1	2	3	4	5	6
			Ring-billed	**Laughing**	**Franklin's**	**Bonaparte's**	**Herring (*L .smithsonianus*)**	**LBBG**
DISTRIBUTION (Habit 1,2,3)		**TEXAS FREQUENCY (TBRC Accepted Records)**	Very common in winter throughout most of state, less frequent, but still the most common gull in the west	Very common gulf coast year round	Common through-migrant (a few over-winter occasionally on lakes & coast)	Fairly common winter on large lakes	Fairly common winter on coast, casual elsewhere in winter	Common on the coast and increasing, (formerl review list), also seen throughout the state
		TIME PERIOD IN TEXAS	mid Oct -- late May	year round	early Mar -- late May & mid Oct -- mid Dec	mid Oct -- late Apr	mid Oct -- early May	most observations between mid Aug -- late A
		Range	Most of NA except far north.	Atlantic, Mexico, N. South America	Pacific coast of South America. Central flyway of NA.	All of NA.	Most of NA. Vagrant in 4 corners states.	Atlantic and gulf coast. Vagrant throughout centr eastern NA.
		Breeding	Northern Prairies	Atlantic coast	Prairies of Canada & north cenral US	Far north northern prairies	Far north, Atlantic coast, Pacific Coast, Great Lakes	Eurasian. Small number also breed in far northea
STRUCTURE & GISS (Habit 4,5)		**HEAD**	Steep forehead, more rounded head, than **Herring**	Flat head & forehead	Rounder & taller than **Laughing**	Petite head on long graceful neck (recalls a **phalarope**)	Quite variable. Generally long, flattened & narrow (wedge-faced or long-snouted), with a peak to the rear and a long sloping profile with tapered snout ("pulled-taffee look"). Broad, rectuangular, shrunken, even skeletal.	More arrowhead-shaped, and less massive th **Herring** or especially **GBBG**. Less "pulled-taffy to front of face/bill.
		FACIAL EXPRESSION	Fierce due to yellow eyes, but more gentle than **Herring**	Sleepy. Smaller eye-arcs than **Franklin's**.	Wide-eyed, neutral. Larger eye-arcs than **Laughing**.	Recalls a dove	Adult: imperious, ugly, crazed. Bright yellow eyes appear hard & mean. Juvenile: benign.	Neutral in breeding, often fierce in winter.
		BODY	Balanced, in-flight tail & head project equally. Smaller, more plump-breasted than **Herring.** Pleasing proportions. The "standard gull" against which other NA gulls are compared.	Lankier and larger than **Franklin's**. Rear half attenuated to long pointy wings.	Compact, recalls a dove.	Dainty	Variable. Compact & stocky, intermediate, to slender & tapered. Relatively slender, non-chesty appearance compared to other large gulls.	Well proportioned, attenuated, bulky upper ch
STRUCTURE & GISS (Habit 4,5) (cont'd)		**WINGS, TAIL**	Balanced. The "standard gull" shape. Longish wings & tapering back half.	Long-winged. Longer, more slender wings than **Franklin's**.	Shortish, slender wings with rounded tips.	A small proportioned gull.	Variable: generally wingtips project slightly beyond tail; some project well beyond	Long wings, extend well past tail.
		LEGS	Average. Placed in middle of body.	Long, lanky. Taller than **Franklin's**.	Shorter than **Laughing**. Barely any visible tibia.	Slender	Sturdy. Medium length.	Fairly slender for a large gull.
		BILL [size, shape, gape]	blunt pencil stub, with decurved tip	Long, drooping	Short, medium thickness	Small, slim	Longish, fairly narrow, thickened at the tip, sturdy, straightish. Can also be more slender throughout. Gonydeal angle large & acute. "Can-opener" bill – upper mandible often hooked downward, almost raptorially so. Gape slightly down-turned, but less so than **California**.	Bullet shaped, shorter and more slender than **Herring**. Slightly tipped, but less so than **Herring**. Less acutely hooked at tip t **Herring**.
		RELATIVE SIZE	medium	small to medium	small to medium	small	large (overlaps slightly with small **Glaucous** & **GBBG**)	Large, but noticably smaller (especially more slender) than **GI Glaucous** and most **Herring**.
PLUMAGE COLOR & PATTERN (Habit 6,7)	ADULT -- ALTERNATE	**HEAD & NECK**	White	Smaller eye-arcs. Full black hood.	Larger eye-arcs. Full black hood. Head always more black than white.	Black	White	White
		BODY (mantle, scapulars, belly, chest)	Slightly paler gray back than **Herring**, distinctly paler than **California** and **Short-billed**.	Underbody, runp & tail white.	Underbody, underwing coverts, rump and uppertail coverts white.	white	White under parts	Black-backed
		WING & TAIL [primaries (mirrors, apical spots), secondaries, tertials, wing coverts, tail, under-wing]	Underbody, underwing and tail white. Wingtips black with white mirror in P10 (very rarely covering tip) and smaller mirror in P9.	White spots on wings usually smaller than **Franklin's** or absent (not diagnostic)	Boldly patterned black outer wings with large white spots (mirrors). White tertial tips. White band on upper wing separates black from gray near tips.	In flight, leading white wedge, trailing black edge in primaries. White tail.	Black wingtips. Prominent row of apical spots on black wingtips. Underside black changes to gray with less contrast than **Ring-billed**.	All black primaries. Primaries blacker than back.
		COLOR OF PRIMARY TIPS AT REST	Black with apical spots.	Black. Some have white spots.	Black	Black	Black	Black
		WING-TIPS IN FLIGHT	High contrast transition between black wingtips (with apical spots) and white underwing.	Extensive black outer 1/3 of underwing	Black. White band separates black from gray underwing. Secondaries have broad white trailing edge.	In flight, leading white wedge, trailing black edge in primaries. White tail.	Black. Less contrast between gray/black than **Ring-billed**.	Black. Primaries darker than back. White mirror in P10 and ofte mirror in P9.
PLUMAGE COLOR & PATTERN (Habit 6,7) (cont'd)	ADULT -- ALTERNATE	**BILL [color]**	yellow w/ namesake ring	Dull red/black in alternate. Black in basic.	Red in alternate. Black in basic.	Black	bright yellow w/ red gonydeal spot	Yellow with red gonys spot.
		ORBITAL RING & EYE [color]	Nearly always pale yellow	Eyes dark. Orbital ring reddish during breeding.	Bold eye crescents often join at rear during breeding. Generally more promimant than **Laughing**.	Smallish white eye-arcs back of eye.	yellowish	Orbital ring red. Eye yellow.
		LEG [color]	yellow	Red to dull red or reddish brown.	Dark brown to black, very rarely red.	Pale pink or orangish (diagnostic)	pink	Yellow, occasionally grayish yellow
		ADULT -- BASIC (differences from alternate plumage)	Streaks on head & nape-- may approach a masked look or be more finely streaked	Hood variable, but usually reduced to "Friar Tuck look".	Back half or third of head retains black hood mixed with white.	Hood reduced to ear spot.	Head & neck diffusely mottled, often heavily, without symmetry or pattern. Sometimes upper breast also becomes diffusely mottled, often heavily, without symmetry or pattern. A disheveled look.	Variable streaking on nape and head, often densest around e
ADULT ID GROUP		**Large White-headed**					X	X
		Hooded		X	X	X		
		Dark-backed (adults)		X	X			X
		Medium-backed (adults)				X		
		Pale-backed (adults)	X				X	
		Black Primaries	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Non-black primaries (white, gray, light brown, brown)						

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	RING OR DARK TIP ON BILL	yes				Juvenile. Adults often have black marks in basic plumage. Red mark in alternate plumage.	
HYBRIDIZATION		Has occurred with **LBBG** & **Laughing**.	Has occurred with **Black-headed** and **Ring-billed**.			Hybridizes regularly with other large gulls where ranges overlap: **Herring X Glaucous-winged = "Cook Inlet Gull"**. **Herring** X **Glaucous = "Nelson's Gull"**. **Herring** X **LBBG = "Appledore Gull". Herring X GBBG = "Great Lakes Gull"** (rare Great lakes). **Herring** X **Kelp.**	**LBBG** X **Herring = "Appledore Gull".**
SIMILAR SPECIES (large gulls compared to Herring Gull)		Larger than **Short-billed**, smaller than **California**.	**Franklin's**	**Laughing**	**Little, Black-headed**	East of the Rockies any brown juvenile gull is likely to be **Herring**. In the west **Western**, **California**, & perhaps a darker ***thayeri*** are also brown backed juveniles. ***Thayeri*** bill all black, straight, more petite, head is rounder. 1st winter **California** is smaller, more slender, longer winged, more contrastingly, less uniformly patterned, showing a whiter head & face, fading underparts, bold contrast on folded wing between paler shoulder and darker greater coverts, and tertials. Usually darker bill, paler face & throat than **California**. **GBBG** is bulkier: huskier chest, bigger head & neck, heavier bill with a strong bulging tip and thicker legs. **GBBG** is white in head & underparts. More "granite-patterned" in coverts. **Herring** is not a whole lot smaller in height than **GBBG**, but **GBBG** has bulkier body and neck, heavier bill, huskier chest & thicker legs. **LBBG** has whiter head and underparts, is (generally) longer-winged and more slender build. **Herring** is browner, less-contrasting body plumage, usually darker belly than **LBBG**, and in-flight shows a pale primary window & outer secondary coverts and less contrasting rump. Smaller bill, paler and more mottled body plumage than **Western**. In-flight has paler wings with pale inner primary "window" and lack of contrast between back and rump.	A 2-toned look -- white head and undersides, whearas **Herring** is usually a more u toned brownish-gray all over. Juvenile "colder" than **Herring** – more white underne brown. All brown centers to scapulars & mantle feathers. "Punched-in-the-eye" lool brown markings, not smudgy like **Herring**. Very bold white fringing on back 1st wi new back feathers. Usually lacks pale inner primary window. Black wingtips. Whitish uniform brownish wings of **Herring**. Darker upper-back than **GBBG** (darker cente feathers). Smallish all-black bill (**Herring** is usually pink with black tip or pink-based). Bill dc into overlap. Long-winged look (usually not found on **Herring**, **Western**, **GW**), Mc body. Pink legs. Plumper-chested. Slightly to greatly smaller than **Herrin**
PLUMAGE COLOR & PATTERN (Habit 6,7)	**YEARS TO MATURITY**	3	3	3	2	4	4
	SUB-ADULT (2nd Cycle, 3rd Cycle) HEAD & NECK	Transitioning from gray & brown to white.	Dark gray transitioning to black	Dark half hood more extensive than **Laughing**	Transitioning from gray & brown to white.	Becoming whiter due to bleaching & molt	Whitish
	BODY (mantle, scapulars, belly, chest)	Variable black, gray, white and adult gray. Sharply contrasting dark centers on coverts.	Back dark gray/brown transitioning to adult gray. Belly brown, gray & white transitioning white.	White undersides	Adult gray is well established by early fall. White undersides.	Adult gray begins. White rump. Overall, more disheveled plumage than 1st year. Upper chest becoming whiter. Grayish upper back.	Black back feathers.
PLUMAGE COLOR & PATTERN (Habit 6,7) (cont'd)	**SUB-ADULT (2nd Cycle, 3rd Cycle) (cont'd) WING & TAIL [primaries (mirrors, apical spots), secondaries, tertials, wing coverts, tail, under-wing]**	Variable transitioning to adult	Black tail band. Dark brown wings transitioning to black and adult gray.	Black tail band. Dark brown wings transitioning to black and adult gray.	First winter "M-bird" with diffuse "M" formed by coverts & primaries. Black trailing edge. White wedge similar to adults has black infused in primaries.	Gray-infused wing-panels. Pointed primaries. Inner primary window. Finer vermiculations on greater coverts.	Dark-backed.
	BILL [color]	Juvenile pink w/dark tip which transitions to yellow with ring	Black. Black/Red during breeding period	Black	Black	Pinkish w/dark tip transitioning to greenish-yellow with dark tip	usually all black in winter 1st cycle
	ORBITAL RING & EYE COLOR	Dark eye transitions to yellow	Small white eye arcs	White eye arcs larger than **Laughing**	Small dark eye	Eye variable, but most becoming dusky, and then yellowish	
	LEG COLOR	Pink transitioning to yellow	Black	Black	Pink	Pink to occassionally pinkish gray	