

338-01-2001  
**Franklin's Gull**  
*(Larus pipixcan)*

**Lake Somerset, Somerset County**  
**April 21, 2001**

**by Mike Fialkovich**

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I stopped at Lake Somerset on April 21, 2001 to look at the waterfowl which have been numerous at the lake in recent weeks. While driving along the lake, I noticed a group of gulls flying from the south end of the lake to the north end. I decided to look through them since Laughing Gulls were recently seen at the lake. I noticed a gull with a black head, and expected it to be a Bonaparte's since they have been at the lake during this time. What struck me was the wing pattern, which did not match Bonaparte's Gull.

I quickly reviewed gulls with black heads through my mind, going through wing patterns, and as the bird turned and revealed the upper wing, it was clear this was a Franklin's Gull. I noticed there were other Franklin's in flight with the first bird, and counted a total of five birds.

**Description:**

- Medium sized gull, slightly smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls with it.
- Head completely black. From the distance of the observation, the eye crescents and bill color could not be seen.
- Lower neck, breast, sides, belly and tail white.
- Legs and feet were blackish.
- Underwing: white with black tipped primaries. In the black primaries, I could see white spots (mirrors).
- Upperwing: light gray with a white trailing edge. Black wing tips with white mirrors. A white band separated the black tipped wing from the gray in the remainder of the wing. This was very obvious on the flying birds.

**COMPARISON WITH OTHER GULLS:**

**Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)** - Many Ring-billed Gulls were present at the lake and flying with the Franklin's Gulls. The Ring-billed Gulls were noticeably larger and lacked the black head and white separation between the black primaries and gray in the remainder of the wings.

**Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*)** - Bonaparte's Gulls seen at the lake recently were in breeding plumage with black heads, however, the wing pattern and shape is very different. In flight, Bonaparte's are more ternlike than Franklin's with a more pointed wing shape. The wing shape of the Franklin's was more rounded, like that of the Ring-billed. Both upper and lower sides of the wing (of a Bonaparte's) would show a white wedge on the leading edge of the wing and the primaries are tipped black.

**Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)** - Laughing Gulls in breeding plumage have black heads, but again, the wing pattern is different. In flight, the black in the primaries is not separated from the gray in the remainder of the wing by white; the black meets the gray. Also, Laughing Gull is larger and would be closer in size to a Ring-billed.

**Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)** - Black headed Gulls have a similar pattern to Bonaparte's Gulls with a white leading edge to the upper wing, very different from the Franklin's. Black-headed shows more extensive black in the primaries on the underside of the wing, again differing from the pattern seen on the wing of Franklin's.

**EXPERIENCE:**

I have seen hundreds of Franklin's Gulls in Texas and one Franklin's at Shenango Lake, Mercer County, August 15, 1999.

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Tabulation Form - Round Two

Species: Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*)

Date of Sighting: 21 April 2001 to 21 April 2001

Location: LAKE SOMERSET

County: SOMERSET

Observer(s): Mike Fialkovich

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Mike Fialkovich

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No


Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead				X				
<del>D. Couchman</del> D. Heathcote				X				
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
B. Reid				X				
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS								
DECISION				X				

Comments: 3/4

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 12/28/02