





346-03-2005

**California Gull (*Larus californicus*)**

**Age:** Adult in basic plumage

**Date:** November 20, 2005

**Location:** Presque Isle State Park, Erie County

**Site:** Sandspit at tip of Gull Point, Presque Isle State Park.

**Observer:** Ben Coulter  
68 Parker St.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15223  
814-860-6911  
hudwit@gmail.com

**Other observers:** none

**Distance to bird:** About 150 meters.

**Conditions:** Mostly sunny. Late afternoon light.

**Optics:** Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars, Leica 77mm APO scope w/ 20-60x eyepiece, Nikon Coolpix 995

**Description:** Medium-large white-headed gull, smaller than most Herring Gulls. Proportionately long neck and small rounded head with dark eyes. Head, neck, breast cwhite, with the exception of blotchy grayish-brown streaking around eye, and collar around base of neck and faintly across the breast. Belly, sides, flanks, vent, under- and uppertail coverts all clean white. Mantle medium-gray, darker than either Herring or Ring-billed, but not as dark as Laughing or Lesser Black-backed. Scapulars with white crescents, rather contrasting with darker gray. Tertials with bold white crescents. Primary projection moderate to long. Outer primaries with black on about distal half. White apical tips to all primaries and secondaries. P9 and P10 with medium-sized mirrors near tips. Black on outer primaries extensive (more so than Herring) and covering most of wingtip except for white tips and mirrors. White trailing edge from secondary tips conspicuous. Tail white. Eyes dark in the field. Long bill yellowish-green, with only slight gonydeal expansion. Dark subterminal marking near bill apex, distal to adjacent orangish-red spot on the gonys, which spilled over slightly onto upper mandible. Long legs and feet dull yellow-green.

**Supporting Evidence:** see photographs and video by Ben Coulter.

DSCN9647.JPG: Resting with Ring-billed and Herring. Note intermediate size, rounded head and long bill.

DSCN9660.MOV: CAGU preening with other gulls. Apparent short-winged appearance is due in part to wing posture. Darker mantle, dark eyes, and contrasting scapular crescent obvious.

DSCN9663.JPG: CAGU preening. Short-winged appearance is partially due to wing posture. Bill pattern and leg color obvious.

DSCN9664.JPG: Out of focus CAGU standing. Left wing more typical of primary projection. Small-billed and long-legged.

DSCN9669.JPG: Extensive black on primaries. Long wings. Grayish-green legs.

**Similar species:** Ring-billed Gull is smaller, with a proportionately shorter bill lacking a red gonys spot, a paler mantle color, a pale iris as an adult, more crisply-defined head streaking concentrated around eye, crown and nape, and less black on the wingtip.

American Herring Gull can be ruled out by its bulkier structure, more angular head, paler mantle color, less extensive black in the primaries, broader wings, and different bare part

colors. Black-tailed Gull is slightly smaller, with a black tail band, no white mirrors, a pale eye and distinctive bill pattern. Lesser Black-backed Gull has a slate-gray mantle, different bare part colors, and only a small mirror on P10.

**Discussion:** This adult California Gull was found roosting with the gulls at the tip of Gull Point, where large numbers of gulls congregate in the afternoons and evenings before flying out to roost on open water. It was observed at close range for an extended period. This may or may not be the same individual seen west of Presque Isle State Park on Nov. 12, 2005 and again Nov. 26, 2005. Diagnostic photographs were taken at the time, but a description was not submitted to PORC until now.

**Prior experience:** I've found this species previously in Erie, and on the Niagara River.

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: California Gull Larus californicus

Date of Sighting: 20 November 2005 to 20 November 2005

County : ERIE

Location : PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Observer(s): Ben Coulter

Date of Submission: 2010

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson								
<del>B. Coulter</del> D. DeKamus			X					
<del>G. Rutt</del> B. Coulter	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	5		1					
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/0

Signature (Secretary) Nick Pulcinella

Date: 8/30/10