







346-04-2005

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

**Age:** Adult in basic plumage

**Date:** November 26, 2005, about 11:00 AM

**Location:** Roughly 1 mile west of Presque Isle State Park, Erie County

**Site:** Lake Erie offshore of Baer Beach Subdivision, Millcreek Township, Erie County, PA.

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

**Other observers:** none

**Distance to bird:** This bird was discovered very close to shore. Probably only about 50-60 meters away. Unfortunately, it flushed and flew west almost immediately.

**Conditions:** Sunny. The light was very good.

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

**Description:** Medium to large, gracile and elegant adult gull, medium-gray mantle, darker than similar species. Bill long and thin, with rounded head showing blurred grayish brown streaking, heaviest around the eye, and as a collar across the hind neck and the sides of the neck. Remainder of underparts clean white. Mantle color conspicuously several shades darker gray than Ring-billed Gull. Outer primaries with black on distal half, and with white apical spots. P9 and P10 with medium-sized white mirrors, visible on folded wing, and in flight. Wing pattern with extensive, clean-cut black outer wingtip, seen when gull flew away. Secondaries with white tips, contrasting heavily with dark upperparts in flight. Tail white. Eyes completely dark in the field. Bill pale yellow, with faint blackish subterminal marking on side of both mandibles, and with pale reddish gonys spot proximal to dark marking. Gonydeal angle not well-developed, and bill slender and long. Grayish legs seen only briefly as bird flushed.

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

DSCN9695.JPG: Although not sharply in focus, the following features can be observed—long tricolored bill showing black and red markings, dark irides, blurry head streaking strongest along the sides and back of the neck.

DSCN9696.JPG: Details of the head streaking and the dark, protruding eyes can be seen here.

DSCN9697.JPG: This shot shows the prominent streaking on the back of the neck.

DSCN9700.JPG: This unfocused profile shows the bill shape and head streaking.

**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 is usually bulkier in structure, with a more angular head, larger bill, 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:** I discovered this CAGU sitting on the water on Lake Erie exactly two weeks after I found one at this same location, and six days after one was found at Gull Point on Presque Isle. They may represent the same individual, but due to the quality of the pictures, individual recognition may not be possible. This bird was found swimming extremely close to shore, but flew to the west along the shoreline almost immediately, and unfortunately, the blurry photographs were the only ones obtained.

**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: 26 November 2005 to 26 November 2005

County : ERIE

Location : MILLCREEK TOWNSHIP

Observer(s): Ben Coulter

Date of Submission: 2010

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

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								
B. Coulter D. DeRamus	X							
G. Ruff B. Coulter	<del>X</del>							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	6							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

6/0

Signature (Secretary)    Nick Pulcinella

Date: 8/30/10