



California Gull

Larus californicus

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Lakeview landfill, Erie, Pa.

Date: February 23, 2009

Time: 10:45 to 11:05 AM

Weather: Partly cloudy, wind NW to 10 mph, temp. 22 F

Viewing distance: about 500 yards

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 with variable objective lens using on levels of magnification

Details: White-winged gulls among a few thousand gulls have kept me going to the landfill to search for other species of gulls that might be attracted to the dump. Best site to view the gulls is from Footmill Rd. where many gulls concentrate on the west bank of the dump. The light is almost always good, since the sun is nearly behind you. Since the common three large gulls representing most ages are abundant there, it gives the observer the opportunity to get direct comparisons with other species of gulls that might appear. While scanning through many Herring Gulls, mostly adults in alternate definitive plumage, I spotted one adult with a slightly darker mantle. I zoomed in on this bird which at the time was sitting down with its head over its back. I watched it for a few minutes before it finally lifted its head. I immediately saw the long yellow bill with a red and black spot on the lower mandible. The black spot was at the anterior side of the red gony spot. The light was very good so I was able to see a totally dark eye. The adult Herring Gulls sitting next to the potential California Gull clearly showed pale eyes. In a couple of minutes the gull stood up. It was slimmer than the Herring Gulls with a rounder and smaller head, showing a slightly darker mantle and had unmarked white head, nape, and undersides. The legs were greenish-yellow. The Herring Gulls standing next to this gull showed pink legs. The combination of these characteristics clinched the identification as a California Gull in alternate definitive plumage. I ended up leaving the gull as I had first seen it, sitting with its head over its back.

This is the third California Gull I have identified in Erie County, all have been adults. I have seen a couple at Niagara Falls and thousands on many occasions across the western United States.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: California Gull *Larus californicus*

Date of Sighting: 23 February 2009 to 25 February 2009

County : ERIE

Location : LAKEVIEW LANDFILL

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2009

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

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	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
G. Rutt K. Fryberger	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

9/24/09