

WESTERN GULL

Larus occidentalis

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

S.o. occidentalis

The Western Gull breeds along the Pacific coast from Baja California N to Washington and s. British Columbia, where it hybridizes extensively with the [Glaucous-winged Gull](#) (AOU 1998, Howell and Dunn 2007). It shows moderate dispersal away from breeding colonies (Spear 1988) but is not considered a long-distance migrant. As such, there is only one substantiated record from the Hawaiian Islands, of a 3rd-winter bird observed and photographed at Paiko Lagoon, *O'ahu*, 24 Dec 1978-late Mar 1980 (*E* 39:96; 40: 29, 122; 41:48, 75; [HRBP](#) 0049-0056). This individual molted into adult plumage during its 15-month stay, and its identification as the n. breeding nominate subspecies of Western Gull (*S.o. occidentalis*) has been confirmed by numerous ornithologists viewing the bird and photographs (e.g., L. Spear, pers. comm.).

Several other reports of Western Gulls in the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands are unsubstantiated. These include individuals later re-identified as other species (e.g., *E* 28:72, 100 and *E* 38:4, 56), many reports of first-year birds completely lacking details, and reports of individuals only tentatively identified (e.g., O'ahu 20-28 Feb 1999; Molokai 1-11 Dec 2003). There are also several reports of dark-backed subadult or adult individuals that could pertain to either Western or [Slaty-backed](#) gulls (*cf.* King 1967): Kaua'i 6-7 Feb 1995, Maui 20 Mar 1978 (*E* 39:63), and O'ahu 10 Mar 1968 (*E* 28:101) and 11-24 Jan 1995. See [Slaty-backed Gull](#) for similar reports from the Northwestern Islands; an unsubstantiated report of Western Gull from French Frigate sometime between 26 Oct and 2 Nov, 1953 (*E* 14:62, Amerson 1971) was the basis for inclusion on the Hawaiian Island list by Pyle (1977).

Considered a "useful scavenger around harbors", Western Gulls were reportedly brought to Hawaii and liberated in Hilo and Honolulu on various occasions prior to 1933 (Caum 1933). No further information exists on these introductions and we know of no further reports of released birds.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>