

HERRING GULL

Larus argentatus

non-breeding visitor, occasional winterer

L.a. vegae

L.a. smithsonianus

The Herring Gull breeds throughout arctic and subarctic latitudes and, along the Pacific rim, it winters S to Mexico and Japan (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951c, Cramp and Simmons 1983, AOU 1998, Howell and Dunn 2007). Other than a specimen from the Mariana Is (Wiles 2005) there are no Pacific-basin records apart from the Hawaiian Islands, where two well-marked subspecies have been recorded as winter visitors. The Siberian subspecies (*L. a. vegae*) appears to be a regular winter visitor primarily to the Northwestern Islands, whereas the N American subspecies (*smithsonianus*) occurs less frequently and primarily in the Southeastern Islands. Many undocumented reports or tentatively identified Herring Gulls exist from throughout the archipelago (e.g., *E* 18:4; 23:45; 29:73; 30:72; 32:107, 33:9, 40:29, 45:74, 47:68), which we consider unsubstantiated due to the potential for confusion with other gull species (*cf.* Howell and Dunn 2007). There is no evidence indicating that Herring Gulls return for consecutive winters and, unlike other gull species, almost all records consist of first-year or second-year individuals, present at a given locality for a few days or less.

Herring Gull was the most commonly collected species in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* during the POBSP project and otherwise (Bailey 1956, Clapp and Woodward 1968, Sibley and MacFarlane 1968, Woodward 1972, Ely and Clapp 1973): at least 20 specimens from *Kure*, *Midway*, *Pearl and Hermes*, *Lisianski*, *Laysan*, and *French Frigate* (USNM and BPBM). Large quantities of Herring Gulls were mentioned for Gardner, Laysan, and Lisianki in Mar 1828 by C. Isenbeck *in* von Kittlitz (1834) but his description favors [Red-tailed Tropicbirds](#). The earliest record for the Hawaiian Islands was of one collected on Laysan 20 Apr 1906 (BPBM 4539). At least 21 other substantiated Herring Gulls have been recorded from these islands in 1985-2005 (e.g., [HRBP](#) 0812-0813, 0873-0874, 0878, 1293-1296, 5097-5098, 6610-6615, 6629-6630; published *NAB* 67:360) as well as *Nihoa* (24 Mar 1965; Clapp et al. 1977), with a high count of 3 on Midway during Jan-Feb 2001. The earliest fall record was 13 Oct (2013, Kure), and the latest spring record was 20 Apr (1906, Laysan). The majority of specimens and photographed individuals from the Northwestern Islands have been identified as *vegae* (Clapp and Woodward 1968, Sibley and MacFarlane 1968), including the 1906 Laysan bird (PP examination; *cf.* Bailey 1956; erroneously assigned to *smithsonianus* by the AOU 1957). Five records do not appear to pertain to *vegae*. These include individuals which appear to be *smithsonianus* at Kure 8 Jan 1969 (USNM 544573; [HRBP](#) 5097-5098), on Laysan 20 Apr 1906 (BPBM 4539), and at French Frigate 22 Jan 1986 (BPBM 161995) and 20 Nov 2010 ([HRBP](#) 6629-6630).

Only 20 substantiated records of Herring Gulls exist from the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, although undoubtedly many reports of unidentified or unsubstantiated gulls pertain to this species (see above). Substantiated records are from *Kaua'i* (1, 11 Mar 1992); *O'ahu* (12, 1957-2016; e.g., BYUH 2213; [HRBP](#) 0082-0084, 0910-0913, 1258, 1321-1323, 5279-5290, 6616; King 1959a; *E* 18:50, 38:56); *Maui* (6, 1967-2016; e.g., *E* 39:18, 63; [HRBP](#) 6617; BPBM 145008); and *Hawai'i I* (1, late Nov 1952; *E* 19:52). The specimen from Maui and a photographed individual from O'ahu ([HRBP](#) 5279-5290)

show characters of *vegae*, whereas four photographed individuals and the specimen from O'ahu show characters of *smithsonianus* (PP examination). The earliest fall record was of one observed 18 Oct (1988, Kahului, Maui) and the latest spring observation was for 31 Mar (Ki'i unit of JCNWR, O'ahu). There are no records of over-summering Herring Gulls from the Hawaiian Islands.

Herring Gulls frequently hybridize with other species, in particular, [Glaucous](#) and [Glaucous-winged](#) gulls (Howell and Dunn 2007). Oberholser (1918) reported a "Nelson's Gull" (Henshaw 1884) collected by Henshaw near Hilo, Hawai'i 13 Mar 1899, and Rothschild (1900) thought that a specimen collected by Shaunisland on Laysan might pertain to Nelson's Gull. At the time, Nelson's Gull was thought to be a rare Alaskan species but it was later shown to refer to hybrid Herring X Glaucous gulls (Dwight 1925). The specimen from Hilo (USNM 169682) has subsequently been identified as a [Glaucous-winged Gull](#) (PP examination) but another specimen of an adult collected on Midway 7 Mar 1957 (USNM 464843) and tentatively identified by the POSBP as a Glaucous X Glaucous-winged Gull appears more likely to be a Herring X Glaucous or "Nelson's" gull (S.N.G. Howell and PP examination). A gull photographed near Kahuku, O'ahu, 23 Feb 1984 ([HRBP](#) 0362-0363, 0376-0378, 0544) may also be a hybrid, most likely Herring X Glaucous-winged gull.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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