

SLATY-BACKED GULL

Larus schistisagus

non-breeding visitor, occasional winterer

monotypic

Slaty-backed Gulls breed from the Bering and Pacific coasts of Siberia (occasionally Alaska) S to Japan, and winter S to China (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951c, AOU 1998, Howell and Dunn 2007). They are regular visitors to w. Alaska, and vagrants have been recorded in California and throughout N America (CBRC 2007). An individual recorded on Guam (Wiles et al. 1993) is the only Pacific-Basin record away from the Hawaiian Islands. Although only 25 substantiated individuals have been recorded from the Hawaiian Islands, they are probably semi-regular winter visitors, especially in the Northwestern Islands, with lack of observer presence and the difficulty of identifying first-year birds precluding more reports. See [Western Gull](#) for several additional reports that could pertain to this species.

All but six confirmed records of Slaty-backed Gulls are from Kure and Midway atolls in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*. The first confirmed record for the Hawaiian Islands is of a specimen collected on *Kure* 9 Mar 1965 (Clapp and Woodward 1968; USNM 494373). Subsequently, four were observed there 9 Mar-19 Apr 1978 (*E* 39:63, [HRBP](#) 0018, 1459-1460), two of which died (not saved), and additional birds were photographed there 15-19 May 2000 ([HRBP](#) 1297-1298) and 12 Jan-13 Feb 2013 ([HRBP](#) 6624, published *NAB* 67:360). On *Midway*, individuals were present 28 Feb-8 Mar 1993 (BPBM 178901), 2 Feb 1994 (BPBM 179793), 2-16 Apr 1995 ([HRBP](#) 1076-1078, 1094-1098), 11 Feb-7 May 1997 ([HRBP](#) 1123-1127 published in Pyle 1997a), 3-9 Feb 1998 ([HRBP](#) 1166-1172), 24 Oct-1 Nov 1999 (3rd-winter individual), 31 Dec 2000-17 Jan 2001, 12-15 Jan 2002, 17 Jan 2014, 27 Jan 2015 ([HRBP](#) 6625), 23 Feb 2015 ([HRBP](#) 6626), and 23-27 Nov 2015. Additional reports from Kure (11 Mar 1980) and Midway (13 Mar 1980) probably pertain to this species (*E* 41:84). All but three of these birds from Kure and Midway were adults or subadults; many additional first-winter birds have likely been observed but have remained unidentified due to their similarity to [Herring](#) and other first-cycle gulls. The only other substantiated records for the Northwestern Islands are for *Laysan* 23 Feb 1991 ([HRBP](#) 0962) and 7 May 1992 ([HRBP](#) 5347-5348) and *at sea* 45 km SE of French Frigate 14 Mar 1993 ([HRBP](#) 0992-0993), while a gull photographed at French Frigate 17 Nov 1989 ([HRBP](#) 0892-0893) was possibly a Slaty-backed. The only confirmed records for the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* are from *O'ahu*, where a first-cycle bird was at the Ki'i Unit of JCNWR in Feb 1987 ([HRBP](#) 5344-5346) and an adult was found dead at Barber's Pt 26 Apr 2000 (BPBM 184288), and *Kaua'i*, where a first-cycle bird was carefully identified at Barking Sands 15 Dec 2015 ([HRBP](#) 6627-6628). A first-cycle gull observed and photographed near Kahalui, Maui 20 Mar-4 Apr 1978 (*E* 39:63, [HRBP](#) 0020) could have been a Slaty-backed.

There are also several sight reports of 3rd-cycle or adult "Western Gulls" or "Western/Slaty-backed Gulls" from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, which were likely Slaty-backed Gulls, from Kure 3-7 Feb 1963 (2 birds; Robbins 1966), Midway (18 Jan-9 Feb 1997, 18 Oct 1998, 26 Nov 1999), Laysan (11-22 Mar 1985), and French Frigate (26 Oct-2 Nov 1953, *E* 14:62, Amerson 1974; 5-27 Apr 2000; and 29 Oct-9 Nov 2001). See [Western Gull](#) for similar reports from the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>