

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at [<zoiseaux@lusfiber.net>](mailto:zoiseaux@lusfiber.net).

1. English and Scientific names: Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): one immature in first winter plumage, probably a female by size.
3. Parish: Jefferson/Lafourche
Specific Locality: Elmer's Island WMA, beach area near parish line and mouth of Bayou Von Thunder, ca 1.5-2.5 km W of where WMA entrance road intercepts beach.
4. Date(s) when observed: 16 December 2015
5. Time(s) of day when observed: about 9:00-9:15 AM
6. Reporting observer and address: Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): none
8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s): none.
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): lighting was adequate; bird was to our south and then to our west, sun was to SE. It was a partly cloudy day and we are pretty sure that during this observation the sun was obscured so that the light was better (especially initially looking south) than it would have been if the sun was out.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): 10 X 40 & 10 x 50 Leica binoculars in good condition, 20-60 zoom Kowa telescope in good condition.
11. Distance to bird(s): initially about 100 meters, then farther ca 400-500 m.

12. Duration of observation: bird in view for about 5-10 minutes.

13. Habitat: surf zone of gulf/gulf beach.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): We were working beach zone from E-W during Grand Isle CBC. Bird came from behind us (east) and we first saw it to the south as it moved E-W over the surf just off beach. Although the bird was generally moving west, it did several 360 loops where it would turn back back to the east for a ways looking down at the water surface and then it would resume going west. The bird then flew farther west about 500-1000 meters and landed with a mixed-species gull flock that included Herring, Lesser Black-backed, and Ring-billed gulls. Unfortunately, there were rain showers in the area and Dittmann was not carrying her camera. So, we studied the bird from a distance through the telescope, and then Cardiff jogged back to the vehicle for the camera while Dittmann continued to watch the bird through the scope. Cardiff drove west and rejoined Dittmann farther west, but by that time the bird had taken off and disappeared to the west. We drove west to the gull flock, where we were able to get good looks at several immature Lesser Black-backed and Herrings to reinforce our impression of how different the GBBG looked in comparison.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*): Large first year gull. Generally mottled medium grayish brown, noticeably more whitish on head and under parts with small dark flecks on these areas and a subtle dark smudge around eye; very crisply checkered above, mantle and upper wing covert feathers with dark centers or sub-terminal spots and pale edges and/or bases (bird was too far away to determine exact patterns of feathers and how this created the "checkered" appearance); upper tail coverts and basal 1/2-2/3 of tail mostly white with some dark flecking on the bases of the rectrices and/or on the upper tail coverts, with a fairly sharp black terminal band on the tail; large bill, proportionately thick, long, and all black; eye dark; could not see leg color; flight feathers blackish with no sign of any pale "flash" on the inner primaries. Bird continued W a ways then landed among a loose flock of Herring, Lesser Black-backed, and Ring-billed gulls. This bird was not the largest GBBG (probably a small female) but it was still substantially larger than all other birds in the flock in direct comparison.

16. Voice: not heard.

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): No other species with this combo of size, shape, proportions, plumage pattern, soft part colors, and behavior: Bird seemed consistent with first winter GBBG. Our main concern was that it could have been a large male Lesser Black-backed Gull, but the bird's size and proportions in direct comparison to several Herring Gulls and a couple of first winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls convinced us that it was not an LBBG – also it had whiter underparts and tail also more white than a LBBG. Female GBBG can be substantially smaller than males, overlapping in size with male Herring Gulls. So, because the bird was larger than all of the dozen or so Herring Gulls that it was standing next too, we felt comfortable with the bird as a GBBG. The combination of the distinctively banded tail, heavy black bill, light head and under part plumage, mottled upper parts, and dark remiges with lack of a pale flash on the inner primaries is also highly suggestive of GBBG versus LBBG or various hybrids, e.g., HEGU X GBBG; HEGU X LBBG; HEGU X KEGU.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): none.

19. Previous experience with this species: We have seen maybe 1-2 dozen in LA and have collected the only 4 LA specimens. We also saw many on several trips to North Carolina during the mid-late 1980's. Furthermore, we have extensive experience with Lesser Black-backed Gull, Kelp Gull, "Chandeleur Gull," and misc. probable hybrids between various species of large gulls (which we are always looking for...).

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: none.

b. after observation: none

21. This description is written from:

	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	
X	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	Ebird list comments from 12/17/15
X	memory		
X	study of LSUMNS specimens		

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: YES.

23. Date: 6 January 2016

Time: 1:00 PM

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? _____YES_____

If yes, may we include your name with the report? _____YES_____

Donna L. Dittmann and Steven W. Cardiff