

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

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):  
1 bird in juvenile plumage
3. Parish: Cameron Parish  
Specific Locality:
4. Date(s) when observed: 28 October 2017
5. Time(s) of day when observed: from about 9:45 to about 10:40
6. Reporting observer and address: Paul Conover, Lafayette LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): Steve Mlodinow
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Bright sunlight coming from a southerly angle, excellent light from a distance, but as we drew nearer to the gull, the flock was a bit backlit. Overall, though, the light was OK for observation.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Zeiss 10s, Nikon D3300 with 200 mm lens, Nikon Fieldscope 20-60 (teamed for video with Samsung S4 phone).
11. Distance to bird(s): Perhaps 50 yards at lowest distance.
12. Duration of observation: about an hour
13. Habitat: Beach
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): Loafing and preening with other gulls. Occasionally chasing or pecking at other gulls. Flew with flock several times but returned to beach, except for last flight when it landed at seas about 100 yards offshore.
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*):

This is a species that is known to hybridize, and suspected hybrids have become an issue in Louisiana, and signs of hybridization were looked for, but size, plumage, and structure were all typical GBBG.

A large, long-legged, large-billed, bulky, juvenile “white-headed gull” with blackish markings above and mostly whitish underparts.

Appeared larger than other gulls present. Some Herrings looked roughly as large, but others were clearly smaller. A LBBG next to it looked small in comparison. In terms of dimensions, this bird seemed broader than Herrings when seen head on, longer and deeper chested when seen in profile, and longer legged than all gulls present. Its bill seemed much more massive than all other gulls nearby.

Upperparts with dark brown (looked blackish in field) markings against white or buff background. Mantle feathers largely dark centered but lighter in tone than scapulars. Scapulars with large dark internal markings, possibly with buff bases, and whitish edges and cutaways.

Folded wings similar in color and pattern to mantle. Lesser and median secondary coverts with large dark internal patterns, buff and whitish fringes. Greater secondary coverts with pale buff or whitish ground color, with narrow parallel rows of dark markings, one terminal or subterminal in position, and another about halfway up the visible part of the feathers. Tertiaries medium-dark brown with smoky internal markings and broad with tips. Exposed folded primaries dark brown, darker than rest of folded wing.

Underparts whitish with darker smudgy feathers that appeared to be dusky centered and pale edged forming a smudgy band across breast and onto flanks. Belly to undertail coverts white, with sparse narrow dark bars across undertail.

Head whitish, with narrow pale grayish streaking on sides of face, slightly darker or denser streaking on crown and down center of nape. Dark eyeline extending slightly before eye but more extensively behind eye. Bill large, solidly black, with strongly down-curved culmen near tip, and large gonydeal angle giving the bill a scimitar shape.

In flight, fairly dark upperwing that nonetheless contrasted noticeably with darker flight feathers. Thin white trailing edge on secondaries. Slight paler area on inner wings created by paler brown inner webs of inner primaries, typical of many GBBGS. Rump and uppertail white with a few scattered black speckles, white extending onto the back up to the level of about the bases of the flight feathers. Tail white with a narrow but well-defined white-tipped black subterminal band, broadest in the center and narrowing gradually toward the outer rectrices, with the outer rectrix having a narrower black band and slightly broader white tip. Some sparse scattered dark markings on tail proximal to tail band.

Underwings with silvery flight feathers and slightly darker wing linings.

Eyes dark brown, legs long, thick-kneed, pale pink.

Recorded Field Notes: “Bulkier, bigger chest, more massive than 2 first year Herring Gulls it’s with; largely white below but a lot of coarse streaking, pale, brown or grayish, on the chest; throat and chin pretty much white, there’s a little bit of coarse barring on the flanks, undertail coverts are largely white, there’s the occasional dark bar, head is mostly white, there’s a bit of pale gray streaking on the crown, and a little bit on the cheeks, there’s a dark eyeline that runs a little fore of the eye then back behind the eye about twice as far, it is white around the base of the bill top and bottom, the upperparts look like the regular dark internal markings on a lot of the feathers, some have solidly dark feather with fringes, like on the upper mantle; the lower mantle toward the rump is where the irregular markings start. The greater coverts are pale-based with dark banding across—

very few bands—there’s one terminal and one about halfway; and then the rest of the coverts are about the same basic pattern but they’re more dark-centered with paler fringing; Legs: big bulky knees, pale pinkish legs; bill is solidly black, tail in flight had a typical GBBG-type tail, dark terminal band thicker in the middle, getting thinner toward the edges, rump was whitish—it really stood out in the flock as having a very white rump.”

16. Voice: Not heard.

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): LBBG smaller, has different wing pattern above, lacks broadly white rump and such large bill. A LBBG was adjacent to this bird. Hybrids are potentially similar, but all field marks of this bird were typical for GBBG.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes, my photos attached. SGM also got photos, probably with better resolution.

19. Previous experience with this species: A good bit on east coast, a little in Louisiana, but not much with such a fresh 1<sup>st</sup> winter plumage.

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

a. at time of observation:

b. after observation: Assorted field guides, Dunn and Howell, etc.

21. This description is written from:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

22. Are you positive of your identification? Yes

23. Date: 11/01/2017











