

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION

Oscar Johnson
Louisiana State University
119 Foster Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
ojohns7@lsu.edu

Species: Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*

Location: West Irene Road impoundments, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Date: 4 January 2021

Age and sex: Juvenile, sex unknown

Molt status: None apparent

Number of individuals: One

Other observers: Van Remsen, Matt Brady, Marybeth Lima, Maggie MacPherson

Original observer: Dan Lane

Circumstances: While birding the impoundments, Dan spotted this bird, which we watched at length both on the beach and in flight in excellent light. The bird flushed after a few minutes, but returned not long after. We were able to obtain many photos. A cool, clear day with light wind (i.e. great observation conditions). I didn't spend a ton of time taking notes in the field, focusing instead on getting photographs. eBird checklist, with additional photos and video: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S78690838>

Description: A massive, very crisply marked juvenile gull. Quite pale on the head and chest, with crisp brown streaking throughout that area. Nicely checkered (brown and white) wing coverts. Huge black bill with a very slight hint of pink at the base. Tail base and rump white with small black marks. Tail with contrasting black terminal bar, wider towards the middle of the tail. None of the smudgy dark tail pattern of a Herring evident. Spread wing with only the slightest hint of paler inner primary patch.

Discussion: A fairly straightforward identification, despite it being a juvenile gull. No other dark-winged gull is this massive, has this large a bill, or is as nicely checkered and pale-headed. Lesser Black-backed is easily ruled out by size and structure. The only thing to really consider is a hybrid, which would most likely be with Herring Gull. The tail and wing pattern however, is typical of Great Black-backed, and I see no reason to invoke possible hybridization. The wings lack the inner primary patch of Herring, and the rump and tail base are very white and contrast with a distinct black terminal tail bar.













