

LBRC Report Form

1. English and Scientific names: Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1 subadult
3. Parish:
Jefferson
4. Specific Locality:
Grand Isle - West Side Beach (29.20968° N, 90.03005° W)
5. Date(s) when observed: 07/21/2024
6. Time(s) of day when observed: 0930 AM
7. Reporting observer: Patrick Palines
8. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):
None
9. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
None
10. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Active heavy rain with suboptimal lighting. However, diagnostic view sufficient.
11. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Swarovski EL 8.5 x 42 Binoculars
12. Distance to bird(s): 50 ft
13. Duration of observation: 5 min
14. Habitat: Oceanfront beach
15. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): I had come to Grand Isle in the hunt for my nemesis Pomarine Jaeger. I trekking through the heavy rain when I stumbled upon what appeared to be a Heermann's Gull perched on a pipe

with some Laughing Gulls close to a dredged sand bar. (29.20968° N, 90.03005° W). I did not have my DSLR with me given the heavy rain but I was able to approach a bit closer and snap some digiscoped photos on my phone with my binoculars. The gull stayed perched on the pipe for around 5 min while I tried to ensure my photos were of sufficient diagnostic quality. I was pretty excited and confident with my sighting but did not realize that this would be a first state record bird.

I moved on to continue looking for the jaeger, when I texted Kathy Rhodes, who I had previously been messaging RE: the jaeger. The bird was still on the pipe when I moved on. She alerted me to the possibility that this was a mega rare bird. I returned to my car to double-check my photos outside of the rain before posting to the LA Rare Bird Alert GroupMe chat. This was quickly met with confirmation that this was indeed a Heermann's Gull.

Unfortunately, others were not able to relocate the bird. Mark Meunier and Marcie Blanchard, who were also on Grand Isle chasing the jaeger, quickly proceeded to the coordinates but reported that the Heermann's by then had moved off the pipe. There were hundreds of gulls and other birds in the surrounding area, with continuing moderate to heavy rain. The following day, birders who attempted to chase the bird were barred from doing so from the construction crew dredging the sandbar.

One week later, on 7/29, what appeared to be the same bird was located in Harrison County, MS.

Checklist was posted on eBird: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S188086633>

16. 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):

Plain gray gull with red beak, splotchy white head, darker gray wings, and black legs. The bright red beak and overall impression made it stand out immediately while scanning the flock.

17. Voice: Bird did not vocalize.

18. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):
Laughing Gulls; several perched nearby for direct comparison.

19. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):

Yes. Digiscoped (via binoculars) photos obtained by myself (Patrick Palines), see attached.

20. Previous experience with this species: I have seen this species many times (22 prior observations in eBird) in California and Washington and was quite familiar.

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

eBird/Merlin, Sibley's, LA Rare Bird Alert GroupMe

22. Identification aids used when?

After observation

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

Yes

24. Date report completed:

8/29/24

25. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page?

Yes

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

Yes



