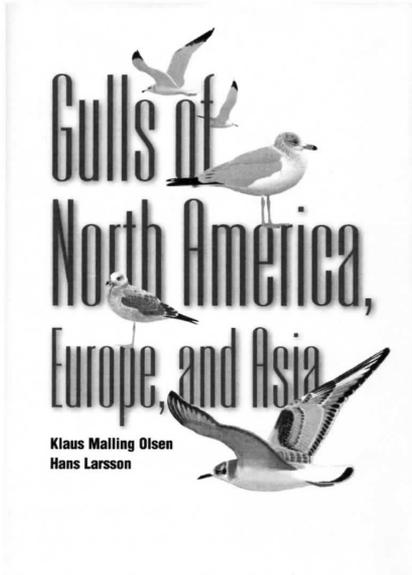


## Reviews



**Gulls of North America, Europe and Asia.** 2003. Reprinted with many corrections in 2004. By *Klaus Malling Olsen* (author) and *Hans Larsson* (artist). Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. Hardcover, 608 pages, 938 colour plates, 17 x 24.5 cm. \$80.00 Canadian. ISBN 0-691-11997-X.

Gulls are magnetic and magical for many birders. Interest in gulls surged in 1982 when the late Peter Grant published his classic book titled *Gulls: A Guide to Identification*. Grant's revised guide in 1986 added North American gulls. It became the gull watcher's bible until the recent publication of the Olsen and Larsson book. Their new book with its superb illustrations, excellent photographs and detailed text now make it the finest book on gull identification.

I purchased a copy of the first printing of this book just before it was taken off the market in September 2003. The recall happened because of numerous errors, mainly in the form of mixed captions, incorrect photo credits, and

inaccurate and poor quality range maps. The intent of this review is not to list all the errors, but to give selected examples. I also praise this important new book.

We had my first printing copy of Olsen and Larsson's book on a gull watching trip to Newfoundland in January 2004. It was invaluable, particularly for European species such as Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*), European Herring Gull (*L. argentatus argentatus/argenteus*), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*L. fuscus graellsii*), Common Gull (*L. canus canus*) and Black-headed Gull (*L. ridibundus*).

The information in this book is much better, more extensive and more accurate for European gulls than for North American gulls. The

Danish author and Swedish artist have little field experience with North America gulls and likely none in Canada. They also did not use the large collections and resources in the Canadian Museum of Nature. If they had, for example, they might have noticed that Glaucous Gulls (*L. hyperboreus*) in Canada are distinctly different from European Glaucous Gulls. Our juvenile/first year birds are paler with less coarsely marked body plumage, and winter adults lack the heavy dark head/neck streaking of European birds. There are no photos in this book showing Canadian Glaucous Gulls. Currently, Canadian and European Glaucous Gulls are listed as the nominate subspecies *hyperboreus*. However, Canadian and Greenland birds should be the subspecies *leuceretes* as proposed by Banks (1986), but this split is rejected by Olsen and Larsson on page 195. Note the correct spelling of *leuceretes*, which is incorrectly spelled *leucerecetes* in the book.

Olsen and Larsson treat 43 species. They split Herring Gull into three species: the Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) of Europe, American Herring Gull (*L. smithsonianus*) and Vega Gull (*L. vegae*); however, the Herring Gull in Europe should be called the European Herring Gull to distinguish it from the North American species. The Yellow-legged Gull (*L. michahellis*), Caspian Gull (*L. cachinnans*) and Heuglin's Gull (*L.*

*heuglini*) also are treated as separate species. The Mew Gull (*L. brachyrhynchus*) of North America is split from the Common Gull (*L. canus*) of Eurasia, but the Siberian subspecies *kamtschatschensis* (Kamchatka Gull) remains a race of the Common Gull.

Gull enthusiasts tend to be splitters interested in subspecies, identifiable populations and hybrids. Thus, some subspecies such as the aforementioned Kamchatka Gull and the Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*) are given the same full treatment as species in the book. I like this idea of treating field recognizable forms in the same manner as full species.

The illustrations are excellent, with only minor problems. For example, the white eye crescents of Franklin's Gull on plate 73 are too narrow, being the same size as the Laughing Gulls on plate 71. The wide "arching" eye crescents of Franklin's Gulls help separate them from Laughing Gulls. Plate 74 shows the crescents more accurately. I like the seven introductory colour plates comparing wingtip patterns of large gulls. Note the caption error in number 18 on page 29 that refers to Figure 4 on page 30; it should refer to Figure 3. This is an example of an error not corrected in the second printing.

The 800 plus colour photographs in Olsen and Larsson are worth the price of the book compared to 544 black-and-white pho-

tographs in Grant (1986). The high quality photographs showing most age classes are the most impressive feature of this book.

Range maps for some North American gulls could be improved. For example, the breeding range of Bonaparte's Gull is inaccurate for northern Ontario south of James Bay. Its range extends farther east and south than mapped. The principal breeding range of the Little Gull in eastern North America is likely northern Manitoba and Ontario near Hudson Bay and James Bay, but breeding in the Hudson Bay Lowland is not shown on the map.

I recommend reading and learning the introductory information on judging size, judging photographs, colour abnormalities, abnormal bills, topography diagram, effects of wear and fading, hybrids, ageing, molt and plumage terminology. However, the interpretation of the Humphrey and Parkes (1959) plumage terminology on pages 13 and 14 should be ignored because it is totally wrong. In the topography diagram on page

21, the line pointing to the gonys points only to the angle of the gonys. The gonys is the ridge at the bottom of the bill from the tip to where the two sides (rami) of the bill branch, which is at the gonydeal angle.

Not all errors in the first printing were corrected in the second printing. I heard that the author tired while making numerous corrections and revisions. Nevertheless, this book is a major contribution to gull identification. The 800 plus photographs, excellent illustrations and detailed text rank the Olsen and Larsson gull book as one of the best specialty identification guides. No serious gull watcher should be without it.

I thank Jean Iron and Kevin McLaughlin for helpful comments and discussions while preparing this review.

### Literature Cited

- Banks, R.C.** 1986. Subspecies of the Glaucous Gull, *Larus hyperboreus* (Aves: Charadriiformes). Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington 99: 149-159.

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**The Birds of Northumberland County:**

[http://homepage.mac.com/wings\\_4d/bonc/bonc\\_index.html](http://homepage.mac.com/wings_4d/bonc/bonc_index.html)

This website was prepared by Clive Goodwin, who collected and verified the sightings with the assistance of Joy Goodwin, and by Steven Furino, who authored the software (Wings2003, version 3.0.5) which managed the data and created the charts. It summarizes 208,544 records (back to 1817) of 357 species (excluding 13 "doubtful" species) for Northumberland County. The county is located on the north shore of Lake Ontario from west of Port Hope, east to Trenton, and north to Rice Lake and the Trent River.

Accounts are presented for all the accepted species for Northumberland County as a whole, and also separately for Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Each species account contains short summary data and then four tables showing number of records by month, number of indi-

viduals by month, number of records by year (1975 to 2002), and number of individuals by year (1975 to 2002), unless ten or fewer records exist, in which case the records themselves are listed. These specific records show date, location, and number of individuals, but not observer(s) or source of the data (although both could be requested from Goodwin where required, presumably).

Checklists for Northumberland County and Presqu'ile Provincial Park are available on the site in html, text and checkbox formats. Other lists, rarest birds for example, are also available.

This website is of interest for the wealth of information it presents about the birds of the study area, and as an example of a possible format for other regions of Ontario.

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