

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

Keith Hansen began birdwatching in the sixth grade in Maryland and illustrating birds in high school. He is currently working on the fourteenth book that he has illustrated, among which are *Discovering Sierra Birds*, *Checklist of North American Birds*, *The Natural History of the Point Reyes Peninsula*, and *More Tales of a Low-rent Birder*. He has watched birds all over North America, Central and South America, and many islands of the tropical Pacific. He spends time on the Farallon Islands and at Point Reyes Bird Observatory. The Keith Hansen Wildlife Gallery in Marin County, California (address: P.O. Box 332-A, Bolinas, CA 94924, telephone 415-868-0402), includes nearly a hundred original works of art, western waterfowl identification cards, wildlife T-shirts, and wildlife stationary. The Red-shouldered Hawk on the cover is courtesy of *The Distributional Checklist of North American Birds*, by David DeSante and Peter Pyle.

AT A GLANCE August 1995 _____ Wayne R. Petersen

Gull photographs tend to elicit strong emotion, either because the reader enjoys gulls and views identifying them as an intellectual challenge or because he/she dislikes them and recoils at the thought of trying to unravel their often complex plumages.

There are two aspects of the August gull photograph that make its identification relatively straightforward. First, the bird has a complete dark hood, a feature shared by only six North American gull species: Laughing, Franklin's Little, Common Black-headed, Bonaparte's, and Sabine's. And second, because the hood is complete and there are no dusky markings on the end of the tail, it is fair to assume that the bird in the picture is an adult in breeding plumage. Adult dark-hooded gulls lose their hood in winter, while immatures either lack a hood altogether or else have one that is incomplete.

Because the picture gives a clear view of the underside of the wings, it is possible to get a pretty good idea of what the primary pattern looks like, which is crucial in determining the identity of the mystery gull. Common Black-headed Gull and Little Gull each show blackish under their wings in breeding plumage. In adult Little Gulls, the entire underwing surface is blackish, while in Common Black-headed Gulls, the blackish coloration is confined to the underside of the primaries. Clearly, neither of these features exists in the gull in the photograph. Sabine's Gull, while having white underwings like the pictured