

## Lesser Black-backed Gull Summering in Florida

On St. George Island (Franklin Co.), 9 July 1974, my attention was drawn to a group of 3 gulls standing at the water's edge along the causeway. Two were obviously Herring Gulls, *Larus argentatus*, but the third appeared different in having some dark gray feathers dorsally. Suspecting it to be *Larus fuscus*, the Lesser Black-backed Gull, I collected it and later sent the museum skin (now number 3277 at the Tall Timbers Research Station) to the U.S. National Museum. A paucity of comparable specimens there resulted in my specimen's being forwarded to the American Museum of Natural History, where John Farrand, Jr., confirmed my tentative identification.

Farrand's letter of 17 October 1974 reads (in part): "The bird is in its second summer, and is in the midst of its first complete postnuptial molt . . . I . . . find close agreement in the color of the upper parts between your bird and examples of *Larus fuscus graellsii*. The new (second winter) feathers of the mantle and scapulars are distinctly darker than those of Herring Gulls in our collection and lack the clear silvery gray of that species, being duller and more brownish in tone. On the other hand, these feathers are not as dark as in nominate *fuscus* from Scandinavia and Russia. The new primaries lack the pale tips of *argentatus*, and agree with those of *fuscus* . . . For the record, I have also looked at specimens of the Western Gull, *L. occidentalis*; this species is ruled out by, among other things, its distinctively shaped bill." My specimen proved to be a male, with a total length of 610 mm and a wing chord (dried) of 361 mm. *L. f. graellsii* is the only race so far recorded from the Western Hemisphere.

In reviewing the Florida records of this gull, Woolfenden and Schreiber (*Florida Field Naturalist*, 2:20-21) referred to the only prior specimen, an adult collected in Hillsborough County on 22 February 1971. They further indicated that all records in the Western Hemisphere had involved adults, doubtless because of the difficulty of distinguishing first-year birds from Herring Gulls in the same plumage. Possibly my specimen also was overlooked in its first winter, as 3 field parties conducting a January count on St. George Island failed to list this species. Indeed, the older parts of its plumage at the time of collection were indistinguishable from the plumage of first-year Herring Gulls — Henry M. Stevenson, *Department of Biol. Science, Florida State Univ., Tallahassee, Fla.* 32306.