

Observation of a Franklin's Gull at Ross Barnett Reservoir,
Jackson, Mississippi

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On 19 December 1981, temperature below 10 degrees, little wind, 9:00 a.m., one Franklin's Gull (Larus pipixcan) was observed at Main Harbor Marina, Madison County, Barnett Reservoir from the top of the dam that separates the Marina from the sewage lagoon. Binoculars (7 x 35) and scopes (20x and 60x) were used. This bird was with several hundred Bonaparte's Gulls (Larus philadelphia), and fewer Ring-billed Gulls (Larus delawarensis) and Herring Gulls (Larus argentatus). The Franklin's Gull was easily seen at 50 feet from our car as the flock settled on the dam roadway.

We noticed that this particular gull was the only one with a completely black head, and with a white eye ring. Its mantle and wings were slaty-gray, darker than any other, its bill a cherry red, and its legs black. It was larger than the Bonaparte's and smaller than the Ring-billed gulls.

The gull flew over the sewage lagoon and through the spray whenever the aerators became active. In flight the Franklin's Gull showed the white bands separating the black in the wing from the slate-gray.

The next day, 20 December 1981 at 2:30 p.m., cloudy, little wind, and about 40 degrees, the Franklin's Gull was seen again with the same congregation at the same spot, engaged in the same activity. It has not been seen since.

Why is a Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage in late December?

Request for Information: European Starlings. Several hundred European Starlings have been banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum bands and a combination of colored plastic bands near Starkville, Mississippi, in an attempt to learn more about the movements of this species. If you observe such a marked bird, please note the combination of colors or color and aluminum band on each leg and send this information along with date, location, and observer's name to: Bird Banding Laboratory, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, MD 20811. Please send a copy of your report to: Opal Dakin, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Box 6Y, Mississippi State, MS 39762.