

SIGHT RECORD OF BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN PERU

by B. J. M. Haase

During a study of Peruvian coastal birds in 1987, I stayed at the rocky coast of Pucusana (12° 30's, 76° 40' w), 60 kilometers southeast of Lima. On the morning of July 10, while I was observing the resident species under the calm weather conditions prevailing in the area, a passing gull drew my attention. It was much smaller than the commonly occurring Band-tailed Gull (*Larus belcheri*) and Gray Gull (*L. modestus*). The back and wings were uniformly gray, the latter with sharply defined, all-black wing-

tips. The white head, body, rump, and tail, and the distinctively formed, straw-colored bill immediately made me realize that this bird was a Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*). When it landed on the rocks, the relatively short, brownish-black legs and feet were seen. At close range, four small gray spots were visible on each side of the head, just behind and above the eye, and there was also a vague light-gray ear patch.

The bird was not shy and could be approached to within five meters, a

distance from which it was photographed using a Minolta XGI camera with a Makinon 80-200 mm zoom lens (Figure 1). Judging from its plumage and behavior, it seemed to be in good condition. The kittiwake remained on the rocks preening for about ten minutes, but when some fish were thrown toward the rocks by fishermen, the bird took off and made attempts to feed on them. In flight, the spread wings allowed a closer look at the flight feathers, of which the primaries showed some wear. Overall, the bird's plumage showed most characteristics of an adult. However, the presence of gray patches and spots on the head suggest that it might be either an adult retaining some features of the winter plumage or a subadult in nearly completed breeding plumage.

The Black-legged Kittiwake has a circumpolar distribution in the Northern Hemisphere (Voous 1960), and since the early 1970s has extended its breeding range in both northerly and southerly directions by establishment of new colonies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Nettle-ship and Lock 1974, Rodriguez Silvar and Bermejo Diaz 1975). These extensions in range seem to be the result of a dramatic increase in numbers, at least in Atlantic populations (Cramp



Black-legged Kittiwake on Peruvian coast.

and Simmons 1982). At the same time, the number of sight records outside the species' normal range has also increased (Brooks and Sinclair 1979, Hazevoet 1985, P. Harrison *in litt.*). According to Harrison (1985), the Black-legged Kittiwake is absent in the Pacific Ocean below 20°N. Thus, the sighting of this species at Pucusana constitutes the first record for South America. It can only be presumed that the origin of the bird lies in the North Pacific, but this cannot be confirmed by either the observations made or the photographs taken. Although subspecific differences have been described for Pacific and Atlantic Black-legged Kittiwakes (Cramp and Simmons 1982, Harrison 1985), Sluys (1982), in his study on the geographical variation of the species worldwide, states that due to the overlap in measurements it appears impossible to distinguish between Pacific and Atlantic birds.

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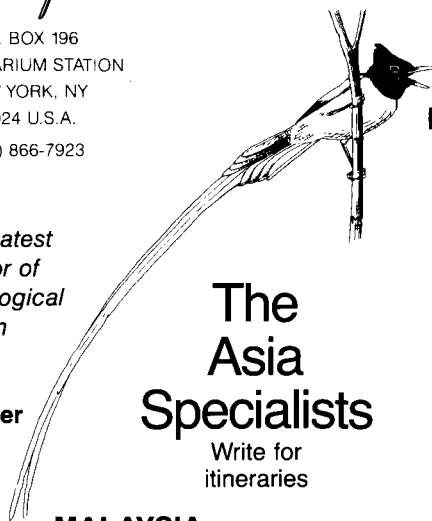
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