

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

The smallest gull in the world, the Little Gull is common across Eurasia. A few pairs have been nesting in North America since the 1960s, and the species is now a rare, but regular, visitor to the East Coast and the Great Lakes.

Keys to Identification

Adult Description

- Small Gull.
- Back and wings pale gray with white wingtips.
- Underside of wings blackish.
- Underparts white.
- Head black during breeding.
- Dark spot behind eyes and on cap in winter.

Immature Description

Juvenile Plumage:

Much blackish on head, neck, and back, a black bar across the wing, and a black tail tip.

First Winter (Basic I):

Similar to nonbreeding adult, but with brownish black bar across the base of the wing, much black in the outer wing, and a black band across the tip of the tail.

First Summer (Alternate I):

Like first winter, but with full or partial hood. Dark on back fades with wear. Center of tail tip often white.

Second Winter (Basic II):

Like adult, but variable black markings on upper wingtip, and paler under wings.



Cool Facts

- The first record of Little Gull in North America was in 1819, but the first nest was not discovered until 1962. After that time, numbers increased and sightings became more frequent. Whether the species had always been present in small numbers or if it newly colonized the continent in the 1960s is unknown.
- In North America the Little Gull is most frequently observed during winter and on migration in groups of one to three, usually associated with larger flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 11.4 - 11.8 inches
- Wingspan - 24.0 inches
- Weight - 3.5 - 5.3 ounces