

Sea gulls

Sea gulls have long been associated with sea coasts. However, several species have extended their ranges significantly inland, with landfills and agricultural development being the attractions. Sea gulls are mainly nuisance pests around harbors, landfills, agricultural areas, and when begging for food. In addition, they foul residential and commercial buildings and public areas with their smelly droppings, and they account for 50% of documented aircraft-bird strikes. Sea gulls are worldwide in distribution, but are found mainly around sea coasts and large inland waterways.



RECOGNITION. Depending on the species, adults about 11-30" (27.9-76.2 cm) long. ***Large, mainly white water birds with slightly hooked bill, long pointed wings, usually short fan-shaped tail, and webbed feet;*** swim and feed at water surface. Color mainly white with no brown plumage, head feathers vary seasonally from dirty white/brown to pure white/black, and tail whitish with no dark bars. Immature gulls often dirty white to brown.

BIOLOGY. For the 4 representative species, this can be summarized as follows:

1. Great black-backed gull. The females lay 2-3 eggs that are olive with darker marks. The incubation period is 27-28 days. The immature are feathered upon hatching and can generally feed themselves. They leave the nest in 49-56 days. There is 1 brood per year.
2. Herring gull. The females lay 3 eggs that are brownish with dark marks. The incubation period is 26 days. The immature are feathered upon hatching and can generally feed themselves. They leave the nest in about 35 days. There is 1 brood per year.
3. Laughing gull. The females lay 3-4 eggs that are brownish with dark marks. The incubation period is 19-22 days. The immature are feathered upon hatching and can generally feed themselves. They leave the nest in 35-40 days. There is 1 brood per year.
4. Ring-billed gull. The females lay 3 eggs that are light brown with dark markings. The incubation period is 21 days. The immature are feathered upon hatching and can generally feed themselves. They leave the nest in several weeks. There is 1 brood per year.

HABITS as Follow:

1. Great black-backed gull. They often nest in colonies mixed in with herring gulls. They nest on a mound of seaweed and other vegetation which is placed on the ground or on a ledge. Their habitat consists of the Great Lakes, coastal beaches, estuaries, lagoons, and refuse dumps. They are less common on inland lakes and rivers. This gull is an efficient predator on other birds and also eats small mammals and fish.
2. Herring gull. They nest in small colonies. Their nest is a scrape in the ground that is lined with grasses and seaweed. Their habitat consists of lakes, rivers, estuaries, and beaches, being common in all aquatic habitats; they are also found in fields but are very common in landfill areas. These gulls feed on mussels, clams, fish, garbage, rodents, insects, and the young of other gulls; steals food from other birds.
3. Laughing gull. They nest in colonies. The nest consists of grasses and sedges placed on the ground. Their habitat is coastal, including salt marches, bays, and estuaries; these gulls are very rarely found inland. These gulls eat fish, crabs, shrimp, aerial insects, and garbage.