

The First Sighting of Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*) for Thailand

While looking at gulls from Bang Poo Pier, Samut Prakan Province (13° 30'N; 100° 45'E) on 22 January 1981, I saw an unusual gull sitting apart from the main flock of Brown-headed and Black-headed Gulls. I was unable to identify the bird so I drew it to the attention of my colleague Mark Beaman. I continued to watch it through 8x40 binoculars and a tripod-mounted Kowa telescope on x25 magnification. Eventually I saw the bird take flight and was immediately struck by the all-black tail and realised that I was looking at a species which was unfamiliar to me. I took field notes and made some sketches of the bird and later that evening I identified it from KING *et al.* (1975) as a first-winter Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*), a new species of bird for Thailand. The following day I returned to Bang Poo Pier with a birdwatching tour-group and we were all able to watch the bird through a Questar telescope on x80 magnification.

Description: The bird appeared slightly larger than Brown-headed Gull (*Larus brunnicephalus*) but no direct comparison was possible as the bird did not associate with the Brown-headed Gull flock. The head shape appeared to be more rounded than that of Brown-headed Gull. In flight it looked long-winged and at rest it showed considerable projection of the wing-tips beyond the tail-tip.

The upperparts were dull, dark brownish-grey with pure white uppertail-coverts contrasting with the all black tail feathers. The outermost uppertail-coverts showed black tips forming distinct spots. The upperwings were all dark, with black primaries and secondaries and dark brownish wing coverts, showing no pale central panel. The underparts were mainly brownish-grey, with a pale line down the centre of the neck and the upper breast. The flanks were grey and the under-tail coverts white. The bill was longer and slightly thicker than that of Brown-headed Gull: it was pale flesh/straw in colour with a clear-cut black tip. The iris was dark. The legs were not seen clearly.

The Black-tailed Gull breeds on the coasts of the Sea of Japan from Siberia to China and Japan. In winter it disperses north to Sakhalin and south to Hong Kong (Harrison 1983). This sighting was the first record for Thailand. A subsequent sighting, also involving a first-winter individual, at the same locality during January 1984, has already been documented (TURTON 1993).

REFERENCES

- KING, B.F., E.C. DICKINSON AND M.W. WOODCOCK. 1975. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins, London. 480 pp.
- HARRISON, P. 1983. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Croom Helm, London. 448 pp.
- TURTON, J.M. 1993. A record of Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*) at Bang Poo, Thailand. *Nat. Hist. Bull. Siam Soc.* 41: 141-142.

Iain S. Robertson
Laurelbank
Exnaboe, Virkie
Shetland ZE3 9JS
United Kingdom