

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # \_\_\_\_\_

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_

UNUSUAL RECORD \_\_\_\_\_

**Species:** Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)ACCEPT 7-0Recd 10/30/99  
(2 photos)**Date:** 9 May 1999**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Def. Alternate (or A II)**Locality:** Walsh sewage ponds**Elevation:** about 3956'**Nearest town:** Walsh**County:** Baca**Time observed:** about 09:30 - 09:40 MDT**Duration of observation:** about 10 minutes

**Description:** Dan Svingen, Harry Kahler, and I were birding at the Walsh sewage ponds, when Dan called out that a Franklin's Gull was coming in. Being an inveterate county lister, I immediately checked it out. I started watching it and quickly realized that it was actually a Laughing Gull. I yelled for the others to get on the bird and we all studied it for the time that it was present. I also spent some time photographing it.

It was obviously one of the larger hooded gulls in Definitive Alternate or close to it. The head was entirely black except for thin, white eye arcs. The bill was mostly dark red and fairly long and droopy. The neck and underparts were entirely white. The mantle and upper side of the wings were a medium gray, though with nothing with which to compare it, I cannot say precisely what shade of gray. The outer five or so primaries were entirely or mostly black with no white tips and no white tongues. The secondaries and inner primaries were the same color as the mantle and upper wing coverts; all had thin to thick white tips, forming a distinct white trailing edge. The rump and tail were entirely white. The wing linings were white, strongly contrasting with the gray (inner primaries and secondaries) to black (outer primaries) flight feathers. The wings were noticeably long; not the amazingly short things that Franklin's Gulls call wings. I did not note leg or eye colors. The bird flew around and around the ponds, apparently looking for something that it wasn't finding and eventually flew off.

**Similar species eliminated:** Only the larger hooded gulls are at all similar. Franklin's is readily eliminated by size, shape, wingtip pattern, bill size and shape, and underwing pattern. Even the sometimes-difficult first-summer or second-summer Franklin's are easily ruled out by the underwing pattern of dark flight feathers contrasting with white wing linings (and all the structural features, obviously). Black-headed Gull is eliminated by the black head of the Walsh bird and the wing pattern, both above and below. Sabine's Gull is eliminated by head color and pattern, bill size, shape, and color, and wing pattern. No other gulls are at all similar.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** No vocalizations heard.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen more than a couple bazillion Lauging Gulls from living in various places in its range (NY, NJ, FL), where it is an amazingly common beast. I have seen 10s of 1000s of Franklin's Gulls and a handful (~10) of Black-headed Gulls. I have never seen an alternate-plumaged Sabine's Gull well, though I've seen a few on a couple West Coast pelagic trips.

**Light conditions:** sun bright and in various juxtapositions with bird

**Optical equipment used:** Zeiss 7x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest distance at 8-10 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Dan Svingen, Harry Kahler (from Maine)

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** none

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** Canon rig with 420 mm lens setup and Fujichrome

**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none

**b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**

**Address:** Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 10 May and 26 October 1999 from notes written from memory on 9 May 1999 and from reviewing my photographs of the bird



Laughing Gull  
Walsh Sewage Ponds, Co

9 MAY 99

Tony Lenkerung

1999-51

(open)

