

gray crown and nape; a darker, almost black back with some white spots present on the scapulars; a slight eye ring; and vertical, wavy dark lines near the junctions of the side of the breast, lower side of the neck, and scapulars.

That evening at home, I consulted Kaufman (1990), which helped me rule out the possibility of an Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*). Kaufman states: "The Arctic Loon is extremely unlikely to be seen over most of North America." In winter plumage, the Arctic Loon generally lacks the dark chin strap shown by many Pacific Loons (*Gavia pacifica*). H. David Bohlen (1989) states "the American Ornithological Union's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature divided Arctic Loon into two species and those in Illinois are now called Pacific Loons."

My husband, Greg, and I returned to Vulcan Lake at 9 a.m. 19 September 1999 and observed the Pacific Loon in winter plumage. Again, it was with the Common Loon and the day was sunny and windless. I was now positive I had observed my first Pacific Loon. My husband photographed both birds together through the Takahashi using black and white film. Both birds dove, returned from the water, spread their wings, and preened.

I reported the sighting to the Chicago Audubon Society Hotline 20 September, thanks to R. David Johnson's suggestion. I also called several people to help confirm the sighting. Darlene Fiske of Woodstock, along with Robert Kelly, met me at Vulcan Lake on 21 September. Darlene confirmed the sighting. The bird was observed through 5 October 1999.

The sighting was early compared to records before 1989. Bohlen (1989) stated: All twelve acceptable Illinois records of the Pacific Loon are for fall, from October 29 (Horseshoe Lake, 1986; RG,BR-AB 41:94) to

December 9 (Lake Springfield, 1980). At that time, all reports were from downstate.

David B. Johnson later discovered a Pacific Loon in Lake County.

Many birders observed the Pacific Loon on Vulcan Lake; I enjoyed daily pleasures of nice long views with my scope and of sharing these views with others.

Postscript: Vulcan Materials Company has recently given the City of Crystal Lake ownership of Vulcan Lake, and has begun a reclamation process. The City plans to convert the 600-acre site, including the 400 acres of water, into a recreational area. City

Council members and an 11-member advisory board are debating what types of recreation will be offered on the site. How this will affect the birding here is yet to be determined.

Literature Cited

Bohlen, H.D. 1989. The Birds of Illinois. Indiana University Press. Bloomington, IN.

Kaufman, Kenn. 1990. Advanced Birding. Houghton Mifflin. New York, NY.

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Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) Summers in Lake County

by Eric Walters

During a visit to Great Lakes Naval Training Center (Lake County) on Memorial Day of 1999, the unusually low Lake Michigan water levels had exposed a sandbar island near the harbor mouth. This location is a summer mecca for unusual birds taking refuge on this safe island. In fact, between this date and through Labor Day, there were 20 shorebird species (including Whimbrel, Piping Plover, and Willet), 9 summering waterbird species, 4 tern species, and 7 gull species (including 2 Laughing, a Lesser Black-backed and a peak of over 100 Bonaparte's). While the unusual sightings offered excitement, I was on the hunt for a far rarer summer bird—the Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). The last time this species was found in Illinois during summer was on 16-17 July 1990, when an adult and 1st-summer plumage subadult bird were observed between Waukegan (Lake County) and Evanston (Cook County)



Little Gull. 10 July 1999. Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Lake County. Photo by Eric Walters.