

(IBB 7:50). Research showed the only place in Illinois that Little Gulls had spent extended summering time was at this same Great Lakes harbor; up to three in 1989 (IBB 6:18-19).

On 25 June 1999, while walking toward the island at Great Lakes, I noticed a smaller bird roosting among the Bonaparte's on the shoreline. After noting the small body and bill size, the dark crown, the small, dark circular mark behind the eye, black in its primary wingtips along with a dark M across its mantle, I was quickly convinced I had discovered my prize - a first summer plumaged, subadult Little Gull! During the next several weeks, many birders watched this bird, often at very close range.

What made the show even more priceless was the how the bird's body, tail, and wings changed as it molted. The molt seemed virtually complete in about 15 days; I even noted the classic 1st summer plumage in late June, but within days, it had lost nearly all of its dark M on its mantle. The black tail tip wasn't often noticed by birders and by the time the bird left on 20 July, its tail was all white. With this rapid molt sequence, it gave the appearance of a completely different bird by mid-July. After its molt was complete, the bird left and no one reported it at Great Lakes or on other nearby beaches.

Literature Cited

Kleen, Vernon. Field Notes 1989 Breeding Season. Illinois Birds and Birding 6:18-19.

Chapel, Robert. Field Notes 1990 Fall Season. Illinois Birds and Birding 7:50.

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



Little Gull lands at Great Lakes Naval Training Center beach showing off the dark 'M' mark on its wings. It molted this mark and the black on its tail in about two weeks. 6 June 1999. Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Lake County. Photo by Eric Walters.