

The Black-tailed Gull (also known as the Japanese Gull) is a familiar denizen of port towns on the Sea of Japan (such as Otaru on the northern island of Hokkaido, where the poem's author became acquainted with it). An adult of this species made an unexpected appearance at Chicago's Montrose Harbor on 7 August 2003, providing a first Illinois record. See inside for details. Photo by John Cassady.



A Black-tailed Gull en Route to Eternity

Now and again, I hope to quit this universe. The map
Looks simple from Hokkaido to Eternity: A simple transect
From Otaru to Oblivion. And now again, the sky
Gets in the way; the pull of gravity proves greater
Than the lure of angels, and I am dragged again to limbo,
The Pittsburgh dump, Jamaica Bay, New Brunswick, or Chicago.

I don't suppose they think of me back east. I don't
Suppose the Rising Sun is mourning. I know by now
The Heavens lie beyond my reach, and I can't suppose
There's any road from Chicago to Eternity.
Suppose, I guess, I rest in limbo here,
A perfect stranger, on a windy city beach.

--Paul R. Clyne, August 2003