

GULL # 2

28 January 2009, Carlyle Lake, Clinton County. Photographed from atop the dam, this very cooperative gull circled lazily overhead to provide for an excellent set of flight shots. This was a huge gull with a



Figure 3. *Western Gull?* Photo taken 28 January, 2009 at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County by Dan Kassebaum.

very large torso and bill. The outer primaries were dark on the outer webs but pale on the inner webs. The tail, which may be the best field mark, was entirely dark without the spotting or marbling typical of an American Herring Gull. These photos were circulated among several west coast birders, which yielded comments such as “definitely not a Herring Gull” and suggested identifications of Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*) or Slaty-backed Gull (*L. schistisagus*).



Figure 4. *Western Gull?* Photo taken 28 January 2009 at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County by Dan Kassebaum.

Figure 5.

Slaty-backed Gull (1st cycle)?
Photo taken 16 February, 2009 at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County by Dan Kassebaum.



GULL # 3

16 February 2009, Carlyle Lake, Clinton County. A set of rather distant photos of American Herring Gulls at roost along the rocks. One bird seemed unusual with a bulbous bill and the development of a dark mantle. Visible when its wings were stretched, the primaries were brown, not black, and the inner primaries had brown tips. In flight, this bird had wings with very low contrast that resembled that of a Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*). These field marks are associated with 1st cycle Slaty-backed Gull.



Figure 6. *Vega Gull?* The bird behind the dark-plumaged first-year American Herring Gull on right. Comparison with other gull species reveals the subject gull's darker mantle coloration. Photo taken 8 March 2009 at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County by Dan Kassebaum.

GULL # 4

22 February and 8 March, 2009, Carlyle Lake Clinton County. At roost with American Herring Gulls, this bird's mantle seemed a shade darker. Photos reveal an orange/pink orbital ring and bright pink feet. In flight, the string-of-pearls pattern associated with Slaty-backed Gull can be seen as well. Vega Gulls, like American Herring Gulls are quite variable, especially in regards to iris color which can range from typically dark to pale. This bird had been shot through the wing, but appeared healthy and seemingly unhampered by the injury.



Figure 7. *Vega Gull?* Close bird on left in flight. Note the pale tongues extending deep into the black of the outer primaries. Photo taken 8 March 2009 at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County by Dan Kassebaum.