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## Laughing Gull in Cedar County, Nebraska

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### **LAUGHING GULL IN CEDAR COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

Johnsgard's (1986) *A Revised List of the Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent States* considers the Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilia*) an extremely rare vagrant in Nebraska. Bray, Padelford, and Silcock (1986), in *The Birds of Nebraska: a Critically Evaluated List*, consider this species as accidental, with only one of 13 records accepted - the description of a specimen of one taken 2 April 1915 at Inland, Clay Co. This specimen was once in the Hastings Municipal Museum, but was sold and its current location is unknown.

A Laughing Gull documentation by Steve Van Sickle and Bruce F. Harris of one at Gavin's Point tailwaters, Cedar Co., on 10 January 1990 has recently been accepted by the NOU Records Committee. The following provides an additional description and the first published photograph for this species in Nebraska.

On 28 April 1990, during a field trip of the Lueshen's Birders of Northeast Nebraska, an adult-plumaged Laughing Gull was observed at the Gavin's Point



Dam tailwaters. The bird was first identified as it flew downstream of the dam and landed on a small sandbar occupied by Franklin's Gulls (*Larus pipiscan*), Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), and Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*). The bird was characterized by having a black hood, large dull reddish bill, white underparts and hind neck, slate gray mantle and wings, black primaries, and blackish red legs. The Laughing Gull appeared much larger than the nearby Franklin's Gull and nearly equalled Ring-billed Gull size. The bill was longer and noticeably heavier than that of the Franklins, and the eye crescents of the Laughing were not as pronounced. The wings appeared quite long. In flight, the gray of the wings merged with the all black primaries. The flight of the Laughing Gull appeared more buoyant than that of the Franklin's Gull.

We observed the bird for nearly four hours, and when we left, in midafternoon, the bird was still resting on the sandbar. The following morning Bill Huser and I arrived just after sunrise and spent nearly 45 minutes surveying the area downstream of the dam before we saw the Laughing Gull flying across the road to Lake Yankton. The bird then proceeded to fly to the South Dakota side, near the entrance of the Chief White Crane Recreation Area, where it dove into the water several times. It then flew back across Lake Yankton and landed on the sandbar on which we left it the previous day. It was observed by several observers later that afternoon, which represents the last sighting of the bird known to the author.

Identifiable photographs are in the possession of the author, and copies have been sent to the NOU Records Committee.

— Mark A. Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Neb. 68729