

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*



Folk Name: (none)

Status: Migrant

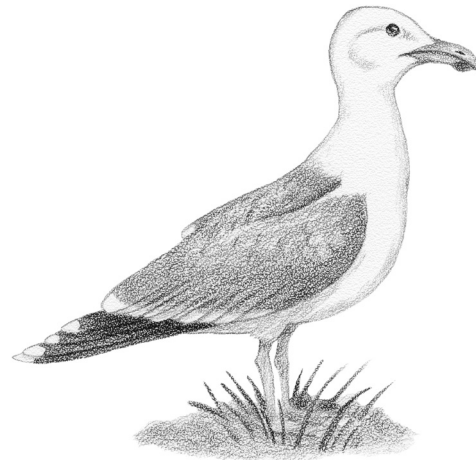
Abundance: Accidental

Habitat: Open water of lakes and rivers

The Great Black-backed Gull is the largest gull in the world. This bird average 30 inches in length and has a wingspan of 65 inches. Adults have an all-black back and pink legs. This gull is common along the coast of both Carolinas and is a rarity in the Carolina Piedmont; however, records at inland lakes have been slowly increasing since the late twentieth century.

The Great Black-backed Gull has seldom been reported west of Jordan Lake in the North Carolina Piedmont. It is even more of a rarity in the South Carolina Piedmont. Charles Frost sighted one on Salem Lake in Forsyth County on January 17, 1976. Ramona Snavelly reported one on Salem Lake on January 20, 1981. Snavelly sighted an immature on Salem Lake on January 8, 1987. One was reported on Lake Townsend in Guilford County during the winter of 1994–1995, and two were seen on that lake on December 18, 2013.

Tim Allison reported the first sighting in the Central Carolinas on March 25, 2006, near Lake Wylie in Rock Hill, York County, SC. On March 2, 2015, two Great Black-backed Gulls were reported sitting in the parking lot of



a Harris Teeter grocery store in Mecklenburg County. Unfortunately, these birds were not photographed or relocated. The first Mecklenburg County record confirmed by photograph is of a single Great Black-backed Gull found on Lake Norman after the passage of Hurricane Irma on September 12, 2017. Jeff Lemons, Chris Talkington, and Rob Van Epps sighted this bird while scouring the lake for rarities by boat. This bird also flew into Lincoln and Iredell counties.