

Submission to Birds Australia Rarities Committee

Adult breeding Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* on Warraber Island, Torres Strait, Queensland during December 2004.

Adrian Boyle¹, Ian Morris²

1PO box 3089 Broome WA 6725

2 PO Box 189 Noonamah NT 0837

This submission has been written by Adrian Boyle on behalf of Ian Morris who was the observer and photographer for this record.

Ian observed a gull with a black head on Warraber Island approximately 100km NE of Horn Island in Torres Strait Queensland on the 1st December 2004.

The images attached to the submission are the only ones taken and identification has been based on these.

The images below clearly show a gull in breeding plumage with a black head, red bill and black legs that indicate either Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* or Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*.

Key features identified to separate Laughing Gull from the closely resembling Franklin's Gull are below.

Size

The size of this gull looks the same size or slightly larger than the accompanying Silver Gulls *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*. This size is consistent with Laughing Gull as Franklin's Gulls average smaller than Silver Gulls.

Eye ring

A white eye ring nearly extending fully around the eye is shown and is clearly divided behind the eye. Franklin's Gull eye rings are also divided but show a much narrower gap and tend to be in a half moon shape around the rear of the eye. The thickness of the eye ring is also a feature used to separate these two species with Franklin's averaging wider than Laughing. The eye ring on this individual is on the larger side for Laughing but well within the size limits for this species.

Primaries

The photos show that there is little if any white in the primaries. Franklin's Gulls show large amounts of white in the primary tips in adult breeding plumage and we believe that some of this white should be seen in the images even at the angles shown.

Bill

The bill looks quite long, deep and slightly down-curved indicating Laughing Gull as Franklins has a fairly short, thin and straight bill.

Despite there being no images in flight to see if a grey centre to the tail was present or a white panel inside of the black outer primaries both features that would suit Franklin's the authors believe that there is enough other features present to exclude Franklin's Gull and confirm Laughing Gull.

References and Bibliography

Higgins, P.J. & S.J.J.F. Davies. 1996. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Vol 3. Oxford Univ. Press, Melbourne.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Franklins_Gull/species-compare/71312181

<https://pbase.com/wildlifeimages/gulls>

Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. & Franklin, K. (2017), *The Australian Bird Guide*, CSIRO, Victoria, Australia.

Mullarney, Killian; Svensson, Lars; Zetterstrom, Dan; Grant, Peter (1999). *Collins Bird Guide*. Collins.



Image 1 Warraber Island 1st December 2004 Ian Morris



Image 2 Warraber Island 1st December 2004 Ian Morris



Image 3 Warraber Island 1st December 2004 Ian Morris