

## A RING-BILLED GULL ON THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

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On 30 June 1983, on South Plaza Island, Galápagos Archipelago, we observed a gull obviously different from the resident Swallow-tailed (*Creagrus furcatus*) and Lava (*Larus fuliginosus*) gulls of the islands. We found the gull initially in one of the abundant tide pools along the island's rocky shore. From there it flew a short distance to a sea lion carcass, where it supplanted a Lava Gull and fed on the maggots covering the rotting carcass. The gull then flew a few hundred meters to a pool where several of our party took close-up photographs (e.g., Figure 1) that show the bird to have been a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) in adult plumage.

The bird was aberrant in that it lacked white tips or mirrors on the outermost primaries. However, at least one published photograph of an adult-plumaged Ring-billed Gull shows a bird with all-black wing-tips (Weseloh and Blokpoel 1979). The bird we observed might have retained the outer primaries from the second-winter plumage, or else, less likely, wore off the white mirrors.

Our photographs document the first record of the Ring-billed Gull on the Galapagos Islands and in the Republic of Ecuador. According to the A.O.U. Check-List (1983), the wintering range of the species extends south normally to southern Mexico, casually to El Salvador and Costa Rica. Harrison (1983) mentions stragglers from Trinidad and Panamá, and Grant (1982) likewise marks Panamá as the approximate southern



Figure 1. Ring-billed Gull, South Plaza Island, Galápagos Archipelago, 30 June 1983.

Photo by Monica L. Udvardy

## NOTES

limit of the species' winter/nonbreeding range. Westward, stragglers have been noted on several of the Hawaiian Islands (Berger 1972 and M.D.F. Udvardy, unpublished records). Eastward, the Ring-billed Gull has been sighted as far as the coast of Sweden at the North Sea (Wallander and Mogren 1983). Thus it is not unexpected that a vagrant Ring-billed Gull should reach the Galápagos. Gulls are excellent travelers, many species covering much larger distances on regular seasonal migrations than between the Galápagos Archipelago and the nearest breeding colonies of this species in the Great Lakes area of North America. Actually, this distance is less than that between the Atlantic coastal North American breeding colonies and the British Isles, where the Ring-billed Gull is reported annually (Grant 1982), or between the Hawaiian Islands and the nearest colonies in the Pacific Northwest of North America.

Indeed, in view of the recent increase and expansion of the species' breeding colonies (Conover 1983), it is likely that vagrant Ring-billed Gulls will be reported even more widely.

C. V. Peterson, T. Säll, and M.L. Udvardy all furnished color slides, which helped greatly to verify the sighting on 30 June 1983. We also thank Dr. M. Harris (pers. comm., 1983), for corroborating the fact that, to his knowledge, no previous sighting of the Ring-billed Gull in Galápagos has been reported.

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Accepted 17 July 1987