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NEARCTIC GULLS IN SENEGAL

1990

In their very interesting paper, Hoogendoorn and Steinhaus (1990) made a complete report of the occurrences of Nearctic gulls in Western Palearctic. As Senegal is both very close to this faunistic region, well visited by european birdwatchers and known as a very important wintering area for Palearctic birds, it is worth to know more about the occurrences of american gulls in this part of Africa.

It is not surprising that the four gull species stated by Hoogendoorn and Steinhaus (op. cit.) - Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Franklin's *L. pipixcan*, Bonaparte's *L. philadelphia* and Ring-billed *L. delawarensis* - have occurred in Senegal in the recent years.

Laughing Gull - there are 2 records :

- one probable ad. on 29th May 1983 on Ile aux Oiseaux, Parc National du Sine-Saloum, apparently paired with a Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus*. (Erard *et al.* 1984).
- one ad. on 18th March 1985 in Parc National du Sine-Saloum (Dupuy 1985).

There is also two records from Gambia : 2 at Banjul in April 1981 (Urban *et al.* 1986) and one first-winter on 27th February 1984 (GOS 1986).

Franklin's Gull - apparently the commonest nearctic gull in Senegal with 4 records :

- one ad. on 29th May 1983 on Ile aux Oiseaux, Parc National du Sine-Saloum, paired with a Grey-headed Gull and sitting on a nest (Erard *et al.* 1984).
- one first-winter on 17th January 1986 at Ile de Gorée, Dakar (F. Baillon).
- one on 24th April 1986 on Ile aux Oiseaux, Parc National du Sine-Saloum (C. Devisse).
- one ad. on 3rd December 1988 at plage de Hann/Dakar (J.J. Blanchon, Ph.J. Dubois and J.P. Pillion).

Bonaparte's Gull - only one record :

- one ad. on 8th January 1986 in Parc National du Djoudj (F. Baillon).

It is the first record for Africa.

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Ring-billed Gull - one record :

- one ad. in winter plumage on 12th October 1985 at Palmarin, Sine-Saloum (F. Baillon).

It is the first record for Africa outside Morocco (at least 4 records).

We do not discuss the various explanations developed by Hoogendoorn and Steinhaus about the presence of these species on this side of Atlantic with which we quite agree. We can only add that, as European gulls seen in South America are probably originating from North America (Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Tostain & Dujardin 1989), it is possible that some nearctic gulls seen in West Africa come from Europe. But one cannot exclude that some gulls (e.g. Franklin's and other Larids as Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*) could arrive in this part of Africa via South America and South Africa. Some Senegalese records are from late spring, when many wintering gulls as Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed have left the region. These birds seem to stay in Senegal all the breeding season, even in colony sites, so the late hypothesis of direct American origin cannot be ruled out.

References

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