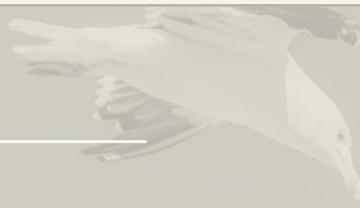


27. ICELAND GULL

Larus glaucooides

L 52–60cm; W 125–145cm



Identification Four-year gull. An elegant, medium-sized arctic gull. Plumage essentially identical to Glaucous Gull, with wing-tip in younger birds paler than rest of plumage. In size and shape intermediate between large and medium-sized gulls. Small rounded head, large eyes and short, weak bill create 'mild' expression and Common Gull-like impression in all but large males. In settled birds, breast is broad and pigeon-like, body slender with well-marked tertial-step and wings very long, extending well beyond tail (projection equal to bill length or longer). When relaxed, wings often held lowered. Legs short with little visible tibia.

Large males have more sloping forehead, longer bill and proportionally shorter wings. Some approach size of Herring Gull but lack its fierce, masculine aura. Small females have rounded head, smallish bill and the longest wings, appearing short-legged and long-bodied with jizz similar to Common Gull sp. *heinei*.

In flight, short rounded head contrasts to deep breast on short body. Wing long and narrow with long, slender hand. The flight is quicker and more agile than in larger gulls. Handles strong winds well and often performs 'shearing' glides on angled wings. Associates with smaller gulls to pick food from surface. Feeds also by scavenging, but tends to stay away from gatherings of larger gulls. Often in small groups.

Juvenile/first-winter (Jul–Apr) Head and underbody greyish-brown to pale buff; hindneck often paler from late autumn. Upperparts pale greyish-brown to buffish with diffuse darker marblings or arrowhead markings, generally strongest on scapulars and broadest in darkest birds. Coverts finely brown-marked. Tertials with often indistinct brown markings and broad pale edges. Rump and tail coverts white with brown barring, most distinct in undertail coverts. Primary coverts often slightly darker with narrow dark subterminal markings. Flight feathers pale greyish-brown to off-white, often with narrow dark V-markings near tips and indistinct vermiculations in inner primaries. Tail with variable amount of pale brown barring, sometimes as strong as in uppertail coverts to form diffuse tail-bar. Bill dark with fleshy, grey, greenish or bluish base diffusely divided from broad black tip. Eyes dark. Legs fleshy.

Juvenile plumage often retained throughout winter, but some renew part or all of mantle and scapulars in late autumn. New feathers more greyish-tinged with narrower and better defined dark markings than in juvenile, sometimes reduced to shaft streaks. In paler

birds, plumage bleaches to whitish from late winter, losing any strong pattern. In first-summer very pale.

Second-winter (Aug–Apr) similar to first-year, but more unevenly patterned. Head and underbody either paler with restricted dark, more diffuse markings or more extensively dark-marked. Upperparts often with scattered grey feathers in mantle and scapulars; most advanced birds have grey saddle. Coverts pattern more irregular and waved, especially in greater coverts, which may be most densely patterned part of the plumage. Rump white with faint dark barring. Flight feathers pale, sometimes with diffuse brown-tinged outer webs and markings near tips to a varying numbers of primaries, including innermost. Eye yellow. Bill pale with black subterminal bar or tip.

Second-summer (Apr–Aug) as bleached second-winter; head and underbody paler through wear. Grey mantle/scapulars contrast well to pale bleached upperwing.

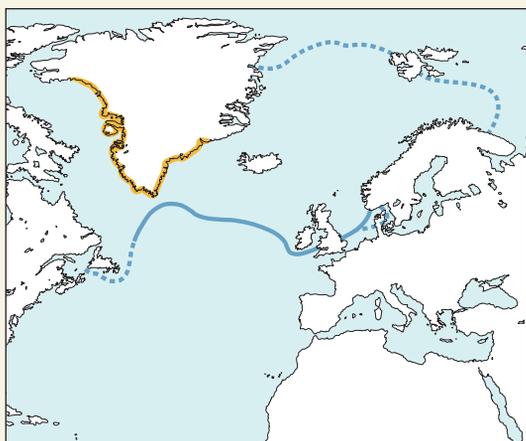
Third-winter (Sep–Apr) similar to adult, but parts of coverts pale brown and finely barred. Flight feathers and tail off-white, tail and outer webs of especially outer primaries often diffusely dark-marked. Bill dull yellow with dark subterminal markings and small amount of red on gonys.

Fourth-year similar to adult, but with scattered brown-tinged coverts (especially primary coverts), and sometimes traces of weak dark barring in undertail coverts and dark subterminal spots in yellow bill.

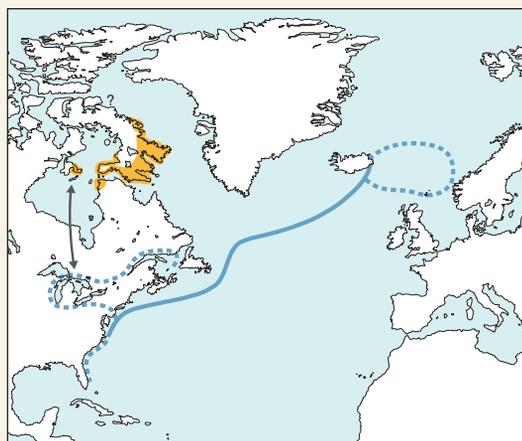
Adult underbody, underwing coverts and tail white. Upperparts pale grey (Kodak grey scale (2)3–4), wings with broad white trailing edge and broader white tip. Bill yellow with red gonys spot. Eyes pale yellow. Orbital ring red. Legs pink. In **summer** (Mar–Aug/Sep) head white; in **winter** (Sep–Mar) head brown-spotted or streaked, sometimes indistinct. Bill generally duller with olive or greenish tinge, sometimes with narrow dark markings.

Voice Shriller and higher-pitched than in American Herring Gull; long-call with slower elements (2 per second versus 4 in American Herring).

Moult notes **Adult** moult to **winter** complete May–Nov. Retarded birds (all ages more than one year) may suspend primary moult until Nov with worn, brown-tinged outer primaries in contrast to new grey inners. Moult to **summer** partial from late Jan, including head and body. **Juvenile** plumage either retained to Mar or with parts of mantle and scapulars (rarely all) renewed in late autumn. Moult complete to **second-winter** Apr–Oct. Flight feather moult earlier and slower than in



L. g. glaucooides



L. g. 'kumlieni'

adults. Subsequent moults similar to adult, but generally earlier, starting with p1 in Mar.

Geographical variation Iceland Gull ssp. *glaucooides* described above.

Kumlien's Gull (*Larus glaucooides 'kumlieni'*). Here treated as a hybrid swarm between Iceland and Thayer's Gulls on basis of enormous individual variation, presenting all types of intergrades between the two species. Most published material stems from wintering birds in Newfoundland. Influx to N Atlantic in winter 2011/12 involved birds with paler and more restricted wing-tip markings on average, whereas most from NE Great Lakes have stronger pattern than the majority from Newfoundland.

Size and jizz similar to *glaucooides*, but on average larger and heavier with slightly shorter wing projection and sometimes more sloping forehead. Very small, extremely long-winged birds as in *glaucooides* are at most very rare. **Adult** similar to *glaucooides*, but upperparts often slightly darker (Kodak grey scale 3–4(5)). Primaries have well defined darker pattern, ranging from indistinct markings in outer web and tip to p10 to greyish-black markings in p6–10, similar to pattern of Thayer's Gull, but with paler grey tinge, more extensive white and at most very indistinct markings in p5. P8 often most extensively marked and slightly darker than p9–10. Easily identifiable birds have medium-grey streaking in 3–4 outer primaries (Kodak grey scale 7–10), in settled birds creating grey wing-tip with white primary tips. Most have faint dark markings near primary tips. Some are as unmarked as *glaucooides*, and are not identifiable on plumage alone; dark eyes are a supporting character, as adult *glaucooides* has pale yellow eyes. In '*kumlieni*' eyes are darker yellow, dark-peppered or darkish. Winter head pattern generally more extensive than in *glaucooides*.

First-year generally darker than *glaucooides* with contrasting darker pattern in outer primaries. Weakest-marked birds show slightly darker outer than inner webs and dark tips to outer primaries, whereas

darker birds have fuller and more complex dark pattern, as 'ghost-version' of adult pattern, in settled birds appearing as darker wing-tip than body. There may be indication of white mirrors in outer webs of p9–10, which is never paler than rest of plumage as in *glaucooides*. From below, dark-patterned feathers often show up as dark trailing edge in outerwing. Supporting characters are more extensive dark markings in upperparts, slightly darker secondaries and tendency to show complete, dark-waved tail-bar. Bill often all-dark, fewer with pale base as in *glaucooides*. Generally moults more of upperparts plumage to first-winter than *glaucooides* does.

Second- to fourth-years gradually develop adult-like primary pattern, but fainter in two/three-year birds, normally with darker markings along outer webs and tips of p6–10. Some have darker outer webs to basal part of primaries, but outwashed paler distal parts with faint dark markings near tips. In such birds, wing-tip appears 'dirty' with uneven pattern. Most have extensive dark-patterned wing coverts (especially greater) and extensive dark shading in tail, creating ghostly grey tail in contrast to white rump. Bill often darkish even in second-years. Eyes often dark, but may become paler from second-winter.

Hybridisation If Kumlien's Gull is regarded as a hybrid swarm between Iceland and Thayer's Gulls, no other cases of hybridisation known; situation complicated by lack of knowledge from remote breeding sites.

Status, habitat and distribution N nominate *glaucooides* breeds on steep cliffs along rocky coasts, mainly in western Greenland. May have bred Jan Mayen in the 19th century. Most of southern and western population sedentary, but populations from north and east Greenland spread in winter northwards to Thule. Some migrate south-east to reach Iceland, where concentrations of hundreds winter. Smaller numbers continue further south-east to Faroe Islands, Ireland, Britain and NW Europe. More reach Europe when winter in Greenland is severe. Vagrant Finland, continental W,

C and S Europe southwards to Iberian Peninsula, Italy and Greece, also Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands and Morocco. Scarce in NE North America south to New England, where majority show characters of '*kumlieni*'. Vagrant southwards to Georgia, Nebraska and Florida; also claims from W USA and Japan.

'*Kumlieni*' breeds S Baffin Island to NW Quebec. Winters mainly Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, in flocks of some thousands, fewer further southwards along Atlantic coast. Rare south of New Jersey and vagrant S USA and Bermuda. Scarce E Great Lakes and Greenland; yearly in variable numbers Iceland, irregular/rare E Atlantic, sometimes in influxes reaching W Europe. Scarce along Pacific coastline southwards to California.

In influxes to NE Atlantic and NW Europe, numbers may surpass those of *glaucoides*. The largest influx, which included both *glaucoides* and '*kumlieni*', took place in winter 2011/12 with more than 1,000 reaching Faroe Islands, and records from most countries on Atlantic seaboard of W Europe. Influx was unusual in

including dominance of birds aged from two to four years old; in normal years, first-years dominate.

Similar species Plumage of *glaucoides* almost identical to **Glaucous Gull**, which see.

Certain pale large gulls (leucistic birds or hybrids, esp. Herring x Glaucous Gull, American Herring x Glaucous-winged and Glaucous x Glaucous-winged) have wing-tip very pale or similar to '*kumlieni*'; large-gull structure and size, pale eye, orbital ring and pattern on surface of primaries – like bleached wing-tip of Herring Gull – should prevent misidentification.

References Boertmann 2001, Bunscock *et al* 2009, Dwight 1925, Fjeldså & Jensen 1985, Fray *et al* 2012, Fremont & Verneau 2009, Garner & Mactavish 2001, Garner *et al* 2000, Hedgren & Larsson 1973, Howell & Mactavish 2003, Hume 1980, Kitchener & McGowan 2000, Malling Olsen & Larsson 2004, McGowan & Kitchener 2001, Millington 1993 & 2005, Muuse 2011, Snell & Godfrey 1991, Taverner 1933, Weir *et al* 2000, Zimmer 1991.



◀ 1 Juvenile (ssp. *glaucoides*). Rather dark individual. Note rounded head, small bill, broad breast and long wings. A few new grey, finely barred mantle feathers present in otherwise juvenile plumage. Bill blackish, but in the majority with paler base. N Jutland, Denmark, December. KMO



◀ 2 Juvenile/first-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). Large, long-billed individual, indicating male. Note uniform velvety breast, seen front-on giving impression of a darker bird than in Herring, which shows whitish breast with dark spotting. This individual has renewed parts of saddle; there is slight contrast between new, paler greyish and finer marked feathers, and retained juvenile feathers. Compare with similar-aged Herring Gull in background and note especially long pale wing-tip of Iceland. Zealand, Denmark, January. KMO



▲ 3 Juvenile (*ssp. glaucooides*). Paler bird than 1. Note pigeon-like impression with rounded head, large dark eyes and smallish bicoloured bill with broad black tip and diffuse division between tip and base. Hindparts are palest part of bird, which is diagnostic for Iceland Gull *glaucooides* and larger Glaucous Gull. N Jutland, Denmark, February. KMO



▲ 4 Juvenile (*ssp. glaucooides*). Rather dark individual. Black bill and coarsely patterned plumage do not exclude 'kumljeni', which would show a well-defined pattern in outerwing such as clearly darker outer webs to outer primaries. Plumage as Glaucous Gull, but here with more extensive dark in tail. N Jutland, Denmark, February. KMO



▲ ◀ 5 Juvenile (*ssp. glaucooides*). Note long, slender wings, smallish head and short bill. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO

▲ 6 Juvenile (*ssp. glaucooides*). An average individual with more distinctly patterned markings than in 3 and 4, as well as fine dark markings at tip of primaries. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



◀ 7 First-summer (*ssp. glaucooides*). With wear, plumage may become whitish from late winter. Note a few grey, dark-patterned mantle feathers, acquired later than rest of plumage. Weymouth, Britain, May. Gary Thoburn



◀ 8. Second-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). Pale eyes, pale tip to bill, grey mantle feathers and finer vermiculations in greater coverts separate this plumage from first-year. Note well-marked tertial step in contrast to long, slender wing-tip. Denmark, January. Vincent Legrand



▲ 9 Second-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). A pale individual. Note uniform grey mantle and scapulars. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



▲ 10 Second-winter, extremely dark individual (ssp. *glaucoides*). At this age very variable. Note extensive darker areas, including darker secondaries. Such dark birds could be suspected as 'kumlieni', which would show a well-defined, darker wing-tip pattern. Iceland, April. Peter Adriaens



▲ 11 Third-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). Similar to adult. Note duller bill lacking red gonys spot, but with extensive black markings. Compare clean pale impression with coarse brown spotting of Herring in background, also note stronger bill in Herring. W Jutland, Denmark, January. KMO



▲ 12 Third-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). Adult-like, but note brown, finely vermiculated greater coverts, 'ghosted' tail band and immature bill pattern. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



▲ 13 Probably fourth-year (ssp. *glaucoides*). As adult, but primaries whiter, lacking white tips against pale grey bases. N Poland, January. Mateusz Matysiak



▲ 14 Advanced third-year or fourth-year (ssp. *glaucoides*). As adult, but upperparts less clean with lack of contrasting white primary tips and faint dark markings in bill. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



◀ 15 Fourth-year (ssp. *glaucoides*). Basically identical to adult, but note one dark-patterned tertial. Olive tinge to bill in winter plumage frequent in Iceland Gull. A rather long-billed individual, indicating male. N Jutland, Denmark, February. KMO



◀ 16 Adult (right) with second-winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). Note Common Gull impression of adult, with rounded head and very short bill, indicating female. Bill of larger second-year similar to bill of first-year Glaucous Gull, but black tip broader. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



▲ 17 Adult winter (ssp. *glaucoides*). In winter, head shows variable but often weak brown patterning. Note white trailing edge to entire wing, broadest at wing-tip. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



▲ 18 Juvenile (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Pale individual. Such pale birds often inseparable from *glaucoides*, but note slightly darker outer webs to outer primaries, and black bill, being the rule in first-year '*kumlieni*' but rarer in *glaucoides*. Indiana, USA, January. Amar Ayyash



▲ 19 First-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Darker, more typical type with brown, pale-edged primaries concolorous with rest of plumage. Newfoundland, Canada, January. Peter Adriaens



◀ 20. Juvenile (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). The darkest types are similar to Thayer's Gull, but wing-tip concolorous with rest of upperparts, not darker, tertials centres are paler and tail paler grey. County Down, Northern Ireland, February. David Tipling



▲ 21 Juvenile (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Jizz as *glaucoides* with smallish head and long wings, but note darker outer webs to outer primaries and black bill. France, January. Aurélien Audevard



◀ 22 Second-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Note dark, pale-edged primaries. At this age, eye still dark and bill mainly dark; *glaucoides* at this age typically has paler eyes and pale bill with black subterminal markings. Newfoundland, Canada, January. Peter Adriaens



▲ 23 Second-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). An easily identifiable individual, showing adult-like but brownish primary pattern and dark tail. Note longer bill than in most *glaucoides*, creating fiercer impression. New York, USA, November. Peter Post



▲ 24 Second-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Note pale brown pattern in outer primaries in contrast to paler inner primaries. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



► 25 Second-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). At this age, many develop adult-like wing-tip pattern. Note that bill and eye are still darkish. Fine brown vermiculations in greater coverts and rounded primary tips confirms age. Illinois, USA, February. Amar Ayyash



▲ 26 Third-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Similar to second-winter, but in flight, large amount of uniform grey coverts visible. A small individual with short bill, indicating female. Note grey, pale-edged primaries. N Jutland, Denmark, February. KMO



▲ 27 Third-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Note stronger bill and shorter wing than in *glaucoides*, indicating male. Head often coarsely patterned in winter, on average more so than in *glaucoides*. Eyes vary from dark to pale, but darkish eyes in birds older than third-year typical for '*kumlieni*'. Newfoundland, Canada, January. Peter Adriaens



◀ 28 Third-winter (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Note grey saddle and parts of coverts, well-defined primary pattern and grey tail in contrast to pale rump. A typical, easy-to-identify individual. N Jutland, Denmark, February. KMO

▲ 29 Adult (ssp. '*kumlieni*'). Note greyish-black primary pattern. Newfoundland, Canada, January. Peter Adriaens



◀ 30 Adult (ssp. '*kumlieni*') with American Herring Gull. Note smaller size and grey, not black, primary pattern. In colour almost matched by Thayer's Gull, which would have shown darker grey upperparts. Dark eyes frequent in adult, undocumented in fully adult *glaucoides*. Illinois, USA, March. Amar Ayyash



▲ 31 Adult (ssp. *'kumlieni'*). Individual with minimal dark markings, just slightly darker outer web to p10. Faroe Islands, Denmark, March. KMO



▲ 32 Adult (ssp. *'kumlieni'*). Another individual with restricted, but darker, wing-tip markings. Newfoundland, Canada, January. Peter Adriaens



▲ 33 Adult summer (ssp. *'kumlieni'*). Note pale grey primary pattern. Indiana, USA, April. Amar Ayyash



▲ 34 Adult winter (ssp. *'kumlieni'*). Note typical wing-tip pattern with most extensive dark in p8. New York, USA, January. Ian Merrill



◀ 35 Adult winter (ssp. *'kumlieni'*). Individual with blackish and rather extensive primary pattern, suggesting Thayer's Gull, but white areas too extensive, and black not reaching p5. This represents darkest variation within *'kumlieni'*. It is unknown if such a pattern could occur in pure Thayer's Gull. Illinois, USA, February. Amar Ayyash