



Chasewater Wildlife Group

Chasewater's Gulls



A Summary of their Status

by Graham Evans

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Gulls at Chasewater

Gulls have used Chasewater as a night-time roost site for over fifty years.

The breeding grounds of many of these gulls lie in Scandinavia and the Baltic region of Europe. The severe winter climate of these regions makes the survival of the breeding population possible only if migration occurs.

Due to the warming effects of the North Atlantic Drift, Britain is one of the closest areas to the breeding grounds to provide a mild winter climate and a plentiful food supply at urban refuse tips and on arable farmland.

The close proximity of Chasewater to the refuse tips at the Poplars landfill in Cannock (3 km away) and at Little Wryley (2km) makes it the first choice roost site for the gulls that feed there but unfortunately the gulls have to compete for the use of the lake with powerboats, water-skiers and sailing boats.

For safety reasons the powerboats **must** leave the water by the time the light has diminished to a set level (indicated by a sensor that activates a powerful light by the clubhouse). However, one or two boats regularly push this limit by a quarter of an hour and by this time many gulls have decided to roost elsewhere, the majority appearing to fly north 15 km to Blithfield Reservoir.

If the gulls can sense boating disturbance whilst still feeding or loafing at Cannock, many are likely to fly west 12 km to roost at Belvide Reservoir.

Chasewater's gull catchment area probably extends to a radius of at least 20 km with fewest arriving from the north where the 67 sq km of Cannock Chase provides poor feeding habitat and the Trent valley is well within Blithfield's catchment.

The main pitfall in attracting so many gulls is the potential for pollution, both to water sports infrastructure and to the delicate chemical balance of the water upon which Chasewater's rare aquatic ecosystems depend. This is an area that needs to be monitored.

Gulls also occur at Chasewater on migration, with some stopping to feed, bathe and rest whilst others are just seen passing over. Some are only found when they have been driven inland by coastal storms but however they arrive, these beautiful birds provide a fascinating and dynamic area of study.



The following tables show the maxima daily counts for each species in each month since the first post 1948 record. A blank means there is no data rather than no birds.

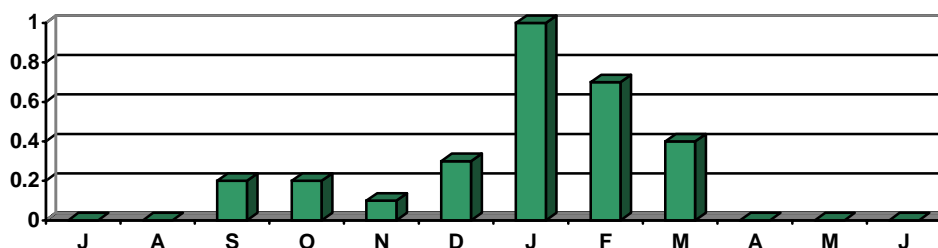
The months are arranged from July to June in order to clearly illustrate what are, in most cases, winter populations.

The idea is to stimulate discussion, so please feel free to respond using our email address.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
72/73											1	
73/74												
74/75						1		1				
75/76												
76/77				1								
77/78												
78/79												
79/80												
80/81												
81/82												
82/83												
83/84												
84/95												
85/86								1				
86/87							1		1			
87/88							1					
88/89							1	1	1			
89/90												
90/91								1				
91/92							2					
92/93						1	1					
93/94					1		1	1				
94/95							2	2	1			
95/96							2		1			
96/97							2					
97/98			1			1	1	1				
98/99								1				
99/00						1			1			
00/01				1								
01/02							1	1				
02/03							1	1	1			
03/04			1	1	1	1	1	1				
10 y av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	1.0	0.7	0.4	0	0	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).



The first record of Mediterranean Gull at Chasewater on May 5th 1973, was only the second ever for Staffordshire. By October 1976 there had been four records but it wasn't for another nine years that sightings became regular. Two have been seen on the following dates: 2nd-4th January 1992, January 15th 1995, February 5th 1995, January 14th 1996 and January 4th 1997.



1st-winter Mediterranean Gull

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
52/53		1										
53/54												
54/55												
55/56						1						
56/57												
57/58										1		
58/59		4										
59/60												
60/61												
61/62												
62/63												
63/64												
64/65												
65/66												
66/67												
67/68												
68/69												
69/70		2										
70/71												
71/72		1	1									
72/73		2	4	1								
73/74				1								3
74/75			3									
75/76												
76/77										1		
77/78		1	1									2
78/79						1						
79/80			1									3
10y/av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
	0	0.4	1.0	0.2	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0.8	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (1970-80).

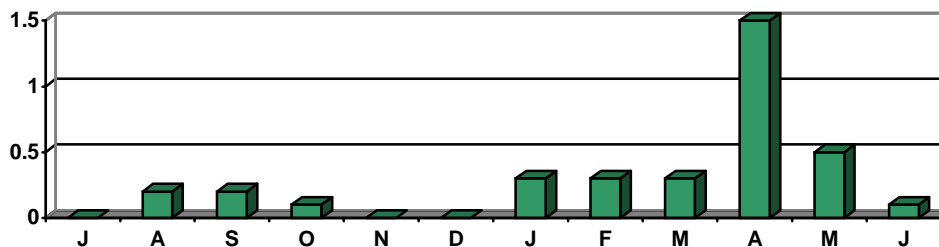


The first record of Little Gull in Staffordshire was of one shot near Chasetown on December 2nd 1911. It was not until 1952 that there was another in the county. Although there was an increase in records, Little Gulls were very scarce until the 1970's when there were signs that a spring passage of mostly adult or sub-adult birds and an autumn passage of mainly immature birds was becoming regular.

Little Gull 1980-2004

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81		2										
81/82		2										
82/83										2		
83/84		1	1							8	27	
84/85	1				3					3	2	
85/86				1								
86/87										5	1	
87/88										1		
88/89		1		1						1	11	
89/90											1	
90/91			2								1	
91/92												
92/93											2	
93/94			4						1		3	
94/95							1	1				
95/96		1					2		1			
96/97								2				
97/98		1							1	3		
98/99			1							4		1
99/00			1									
00/01										1	2	
01/02									1			
02/03										7		
03/04				1								
10y/av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.5	0.5	0.1

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).



After 1980, the pattern of occurrence became well defined with a particularly strong passage in May. The last ten years has produced a wider scatter of records and a weakening of the autumn passage. Several records of winter roosting birds in the mid-90's have not been repeated in recent years. The spring passage has tended to be slightly earlier but south-easterly breezes in late April and early May remain the classic conditions for bringing Little Gulls to Chasewater. The 27 on May 1st 1984, still being the highest count for Staffordshire.



Adult Little Gull

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

There have been two claims of this rare, pelagic gull but neither record quite got through the WMBC Records Committee.

One was claimed during the 'Great Gale' on 16th October 1987 and another during strong south-westerlies on 13th September 1997.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
48/49						200						
49/50												
50/51												
51/52					500							
52/53												
53/54												
54/55								2500				
55/56					2500			2000				
56/57												
57/58												
58/59												
59/60												
60/61						3000						
61/62							4000					
62/63												
63/64												
64/65						2200						
65/66						1000						
66/67						3400	2200					
67/68					2000	3500	3000					
68/69						3000						
69/70					5000				4500			
70/71												
71/72						3500	5000					
72/73						8000						
73/74						8000	3480					
74/75					5000	6000						
75/76												
76/77						7500						
77/78						6000						
78/79						5000						
79/80												

Prior to the 1940's there were no large numbers of Black-headed Gulls roosting in Staffordshire. Between 1948 and 1954 they were regarded as being a common visitor all the year round at Chasewater and with up to 1500 roosting during the winter (not recorded above due to not being month specific).

By the 1970's the peak roost numbers (about 6000) appeared to occur in December but few counts were made at other times of the year.



Adult Black-headed Gull, March 2004 (Neil Stych)

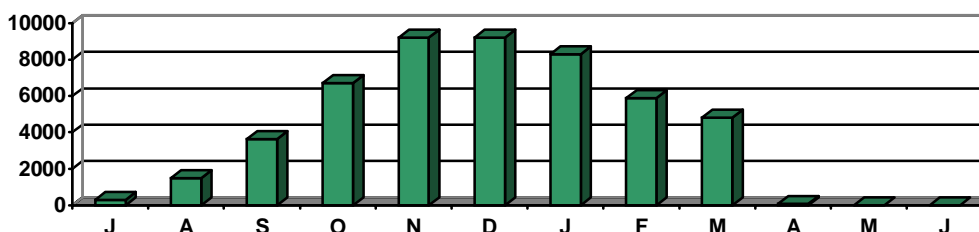


1st summer Black-headed Gull, March 2004 (Neil Stych)

Black-headed Gull 1980-2004

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81						10000	12000					
81/82												
82/83						10000						
83/84						12000						
84/85	1000	3000		7000			10000		6000	25		
85/86	1000				8000							
86/87			3000		7000							
87/88						12000						
88/89				8000								
89/90												
90/91				8000	8000							
91/92									3000	50		
92/93		1000	2500	8000	9500		13000	5000	4000			
93/94	920		4000	6000	10000	15000		6000	1800	16		2
94/95	500	600		6700	8000	10000	6000	5500	5500	23	6	6
95/96	1200	3000	4000	5000	7500	12000	7000	4700	3000	162	2	
96/97	620	2000	3000	6000	9000	9500	10000	6000	4500	49	4	25
97/98	1000	2000	3500	9000	9000	12000	10000	10000	3000	145	6	5
98/99	1200	3500	3500	5000	10000	12000	12000	7000	5500	21	10	10
99/00	160	1600	3400	4000	8000	8300	6000	5500	4500	20	8	2
00/01	650	2400	3100	9000	11000	10000	11500	6200	5000	12	8	1
01/02	72	1000	3200	5800	8500	9500	7000	6000	4000	37	3	5
02/03	150	950	4200	7000	10000	9200	9000	6500	5000	280	5	15
03/04	475	1550	4300	7800	8500	9000	8000	5300				
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
5y/av	301	1500	3640	6720	9200	9200	8300	5900	4800	74	7	7

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 5 years).



It is very difficult to make accurate estimates of so many small gulls on dark winters' evenings but the figures show a very consistent pattern with an early winter peak and a very sudden departure in mid-March. Ringed and colour marked birds have shown that at least a proportion of the winter population originates from the region bounded by the Netherlands and Denmark, through the Baltic to Finland, The earliest record of an adult in breeding plumage is of one on November 1st 1988 and the record count was 15000 on December 24th 1993.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

The only accepted record of this rare visitor from North America is of an adult on February 14th 1999. However, a year hardly goes by without a claim being made, some clearly involving mistaken identity but doubtlessly good records have also slipped through the net.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
50/51											12	
51/52					10	10						
52/53												
53/54												
54/55		60						20				
55/56												
56/57												
57/58												
58/59												
59/60												
60/61												
61/62												
62/63												
63/64												
64/65												
65/66												
66/67					3						17	
67/68												
68/69												
69/70							15					
70/71												
71/72					10	10						
72/73												
73/74						15	12					
74/75												
75/76		10			10			48				
76/77												
77/78								20				
78/79								30				
79/80												

The 1954 WMBC Report referred to Common Gulls as being a common visitor to Cannock Reservoir (Chasewater), sometimes in parties of 20 or 30, however there were few date specific data. The records show a fairly consistent winter population with the occasional occurrence of passage flocks in August, February and May.

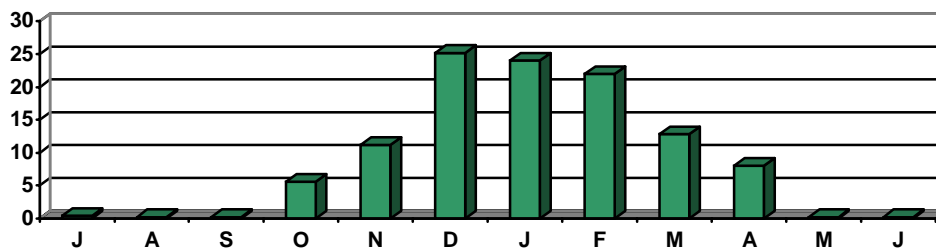


First-summer Common Gull, March 2004 (Neil Stych)

Common Gull 1980-2004

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81									44			
81/82												
82/83												
83/84								5				
84/85										11		
85/86								117		37		
86/87	1						30	50	30	1		
87/88												
88/89												
89/90	4									5		
90/91				4	4	16	15	26	8			
91/92					10	17	50			1		
92/93							15	10	13	1		
93/94				5				10	2	2		
94/95		1		2			21	4	7	1	3	
95/96				4	2	35	304	300	14	81		
96/97		1	1	1	8	40	31	15	5	2		2
97/98			4	2	4	11	10	10	8	5	2	
98/99	4		1	2	2	25	10	20	12	17	1	
99/00			1	4	9	21	25	20	10	1		
00/01	1			4	5	35	25	15	12	1		
01/02				1	10	20	20	20	10	1		
02/03		1		4	7	20	30	30	20	20	1	1
03/04	1			15	25	30	20	25				
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
5y/av	0.4	0.2	0.2	5.6	11.2	25.2	24	22	12.8	8	0.2	0.2

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 5 years).

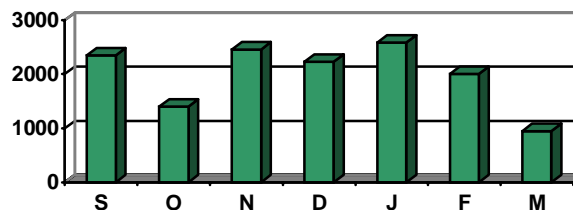


More comprehensive recording over the past fifteen years has shown that Common Gulls can turn up throughout the year but the highest numbers are recorded from December to March. Occasionally there is an obvious passage during April when noisy flocks of adults have been seen gathering with the other roosting gulls but leaving to the north before dark. Exceptional numbers occurred during the winter in 1996 (304 on January 9th being the record count) when there was also evidence of a strong passage in April.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
54/55								40				
55/56												
56/57												
57/58												
58/59												
59/60						70						
60/61												
61/62				3000								
62/63												
63/64						120						
64/65					450							
65/66												
66/67						420	600					
67/68					450	600						
68/69						2000						
69/70												
70/71				1200								
71/72			2500				1500					
72/73						2000	3500					
73/74			2200									
74/75				1600	3200	4150	2750	2400	800			
75/76					2600	2000		1600				
76/77						3000						
77/78					1500	1500						
78/79						2500						
79/80					2500				1100			
10 y/av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
			2350	1400	2450	2225	2583	2000	950			

Average highest daily maxima for September to March (1970-80).



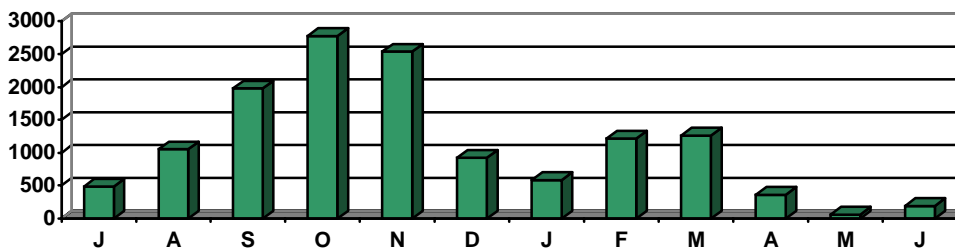
The 1954 WMBC Report referred to Lesser Black-backed Gulls being a common visitor, sometimes in small parties. Up to this time it was primarily a passage migrant with few birds wintering in Britain. The first reference to winter roosting was in 1955, but the first report of a large roost at Chasewater wasn't until October 1961 (probably of passage birds). This is over five years after the first high count of Herring Gulls although there is clearly a lack of data to make a true judgement of roosting patterns or overall occurrence until the 1970's when there was clearly a large increase in roosting birds with the peak numbers being in mid-winter.

One or two of the Scandinavian race *L. f. intermedius* were recorded frequently from September to January with many of the 450 present in November 1965 being thought to be this sub-species as were up to 5 in November and December 1975.

Lesser Black-backed Gull 1980-2004

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81												
81/82				3800								
82/83					4000		1500					
83/84				1550		1500						
84/85									1100		50	50
85/86	550					700	300	350	1100	450		40
86/87		335	450				200	550	500		63	
87/88	300											
88/89				2500								
89/90								750	1350			
90/91			1000	3650	2200	1000	1500	930	805			
91/92				2000	3200				550			
92/93		350	1000	2500	4000	1000		1115	100			
93/94	80		1400	2000	2000	1500		1400	800	65		
94/95	500	1500		2000	2100	1300	1300	1450	1400	285	120	45
95/96	1150	1200	2300	2500	3000	1000	800	850	1500	440	260	1
96/97	200	1250	2100	3500	1500	1500	1200	1200	1050	200	250	270
97/98	1500	2000	2500	3000	3000	1000	1000	3000	1100	600	400	435
98/99	1700	2800	2800	3400	2700	1000	1500	2000	1600	370	160	160
99/00	450	1300	2500	2500	2000	1500	750	1550	1600	600	48	400
00/01	700	850	2000	3200	3000	1000	1100	1400	1100	250	21	12
01/02	145	320	2000	1700	1300	1000	175	1500	1100	172	63	140
02/03	650	1200	3550	4200	4000	1000	600	1150	900	400	2	225
03/04	480	1600	2100	2300	2400	125	310	485				
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
5y/av	485	1054	1980	2780	2540	925	587	1217	1260	358	59	187

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 5 years)



The more comprehensive counts in recent years have revealed a pattern of occurrence quite different from the apparent pattern in the 70's. There is a distinct peak during October (the record count of 4200 was made on October 11th 2002) and early November but numbers tend to fall dramatically in December and early January, The monthly maxima figures tend to mask this dip in numbers since they can still be high at the start of December and have started to increase again by the end of January. It may be no coincidence that this dip in numbers occurs during the peak time for Herring and, particularly, Great Black-backed Gulls. It may be that these more dominant gulls feed first at the tip and have first choice of roost site, leaving the Lesser Black-backs to take a less stressed refuge at the more distant Belvide roost. Counts during mid January 2004 appear to support this idea and are tabulated below:

	Lesser Black-backed	Herring	Great Black-backed
Chasewater	70	1800	575
Belvide	3000	550	50

L. f. intermedius, from southern Scandinavia, continues to be recorded, particularly during the autumn and spring passage periods but it can be very difficult to be sure of the identification of many birds in what is frequently poor light and long range. There is a great range in the tone of grey within *L. f. graellsii* with the darker Dutch 'intergrades' now shown to be this race.

Although there have been several claims of *L. f. fuscus* (Baltic Gull) over the years none could be proven and it seems very unlikely that this race is anything more than a rare vagrant to Britain.



L. f. graellsii, March 2004 (Neil Stych)



Adult *L. f. graellsii*, March 2004 (Neil Stych)

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
48/49		2		1	25							
49/50												
50/51												
51/52												
52/53												
53/54												
54/55								300				
55/56							2000					
56/57												
57/58												
58/59												
59/60												
60/61						900						
61/62												
62/63												
63/64												
64/65												
65/66						1000	1000					
66/67						210	1500					
67/68						830	1000					
68/69												
69/70												
70/71						2000	1500					
71/72						1500	2000					
72/73						700	3500					
73/74						2000		250				
74/75					200	500	1300			300		
75/76						500	1400					
76/77												
77/78						1300						
78/79						200						
79/80												

Prior to the mid 1940's Herring Gulls were known only as very scarce migrants or storm blown visitors to the Midlands. The WMBC Report for 1954 referred to Herring Gulls being common visitors to Cannock Reservoir (Chasewater) and sometimes staying to roost in small numbers during the winter although most birds were said to move on to roost at Belvide Reservoir, ten miles to the west.

The record of 2000 in 1956 may have been exceptional but although the data are sparse, there are hints that a roost of around 1000 could have been regular by the mid 1950's and certainly by the mid 60's. By the 70's the roost appears to have at least doubled and the record count of 3500 was made on January 21st 1973 (before the creation of Cannock refuse tip).

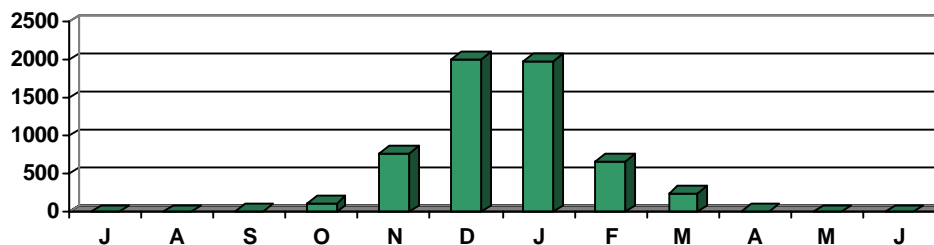
It was in 1974 that Rob Hume and other gull watchers began to notice the wide variety of 'types' of Herring Gulls roosting at Chasewater, including the large, dark nominate Scandinavian birds and small numbers of dark mantled yellow-legged birds.

In 1978, Rob Hume's paper *Variations in Herring Gulls at a Midland roost*, appeared in *British Birds* and many birders were inspired to take up the passion of Gull Watching.

Herring Gull 1980-2004

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81						500	2500					
81/82												
82/83						1100	1500					
83/84						1500	700					
84/85							2000		240		1	1
85/86		1		50	300	800	500		200	60		
86/87		2		30			3000	2000				
87/88									175	65		
88/89												
89/90												
90/91				16	130	750	2700					
91/92									48			
92/93		1		50		700		500				
93/94			5	15			1500	600	80	18		
94/95		1		100	1000	1500	2000	350	250	18	3	
95/96		2	20		850	2000	1200	350	96	56		
96/97			6	200	1500	1700	1500	400	150	1	2	1
97/98			1	150	500	2000	2800	1250	200	60	5	1
98/99		1	6	150	1500	2500	3000	1200	400	10	1	1
99/00		1	6	100	1000	2000	1500	1000	200	30		
00/01		1	8	35	800	1200	2400	350	210	20		1
01/02	1	2	10	50	600	2500	1700	1500	350	27		1
02/03	2	1	17	160	700	1500	2500	250	60	8	2	
03/04	1	2	20	250	800	2900	1800	295				
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
5y/av	0.8	1.4	12.2	119	780	2020	1980	679	244	19	0.6	0.4

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 5 years).



The more comprehensive coverage in recent years has confirmed the pronounced mid winter peak in numbers and there appears to be little change in the average numbers roosting over a considerable period of time.

One or two individually identifiable birds, such as the pure white individual that occurred in six consecutive winters until 1986 have implied there may be a fairly stable population of adult birds that return each winter. Most of these adults have departed by the start of February, leaving immatures to remain until March when some of them can be very faded. A bird from March 23rd – 25th 1988 was likely to have been such a bird but it did show some of the features of Thayer's Gull *Larus (glaucoides) thayeri*.



Adult Herring Gull, March 2004 (Neil Stych)



Adult Herring Gull, December 24th 2003 (Graham Evans)

These two photographs show the great range in size and tone of grey displayed by Herring Gulls. The first photo shows a small, pale *argenteus* that still has an immature bill pattern. The second bird, probably an extreme *argentatus*, was nearly the size of a Great Black-backed Gull and almost as dark as *L. f. graellsii*.



2nd summer *argentatus* with adult *graellsii*, March 2004 (Neil Stych)

Western Yellow-legged Gull *Larus argentatus michahellis*

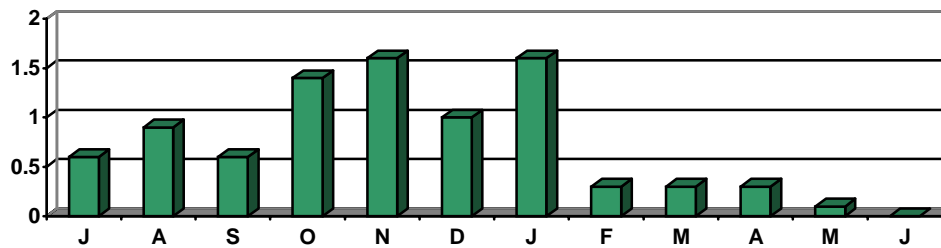
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
74/75					1	1	1					
75/76					2	2	2	1	1			
76/77				1	1	1						
77/78						1	1					
78/79												
79/80												
80/81												
81/82												
82/83					2							
83/84						1						
84/85				1	1	1						
85/86							1					
86/87												
87/88				1			2					
88/89				1	3	1						
89/90					2							
90/91				3	2	2			1			
91/92					1	1						
92/93					6	1	2					
93/94				1	1		1					
94/95				2	1	1	1					
95/96			1		1	3	3					
96/97			1	2	3		1	1				
97/98	2	1	1	1	3	1						
98/99	1				2		1	1		1	1	
99/00			1	6	1	1		1				
00/01						1	3					
01/02		2				1	5		1	1		
02/03	1	2	1		2	1	1		2	1		
03/04	2	4	1	3	3	1	1					
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
10y/av	0.6	0.9	0.6	1.4	1.6	1.0	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0

L. a. michahellis, which is the form of Herring Gull found breeding in the western Mediterranean, is now considered by most birdwatchers to be a distinct species but it has not yet been officially accepted as such by the British Ornithological Union (BOU). The identification features of *michahellis* were unknown to most birders until at least the late 70's and even then immature plumages were considered very difficult or impossible to distinguish from other races. Recent research and dissemination of findings through literature and the internet has led to many more observers being able to make (hopefully) an accurate identification of most birds they find.

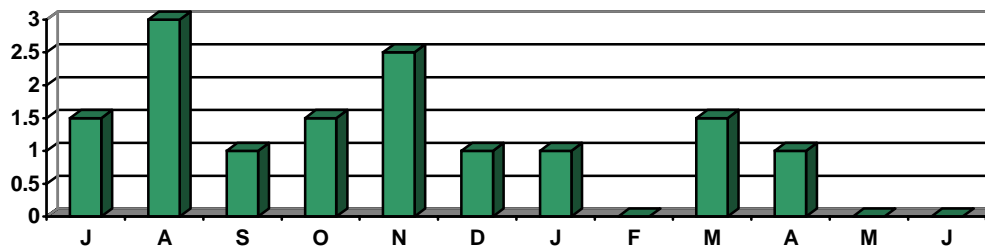
An adult bird showing the characteristics of *michahellis* was first identified in November 1974. Since then sightings have been regular but, until recently, records have needed to be supported by a written description resulting in a rather sketchy distribution picture that tends to reflect times of active coverage rather than presence of birds. Recent attempts to scrutinise the roost throughout the year have shown what is probably a more realistic pattern that more closely reflects the situation in south-eastern England where fairly large numbers can occur in July and August.

It appears that a Herring Gull at Chasewater during the summer months is possibly more likely to be *L. a. michahellis* than *L. a. argentatus*.

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).



Average highest daily maxima for each month (2002-04)



It is unfortunate that during the summer there is water-skiing on most evenings and gulls either don't roost at all or arrive far too late to be accurately identified. The vast majority of gulls roosting during the summer are immature Lesser Black-backed and a silhouetted immature Yellow-legged would not stand out well at half a mile range!

Caspian Gull *Larus argentatus cachinans*

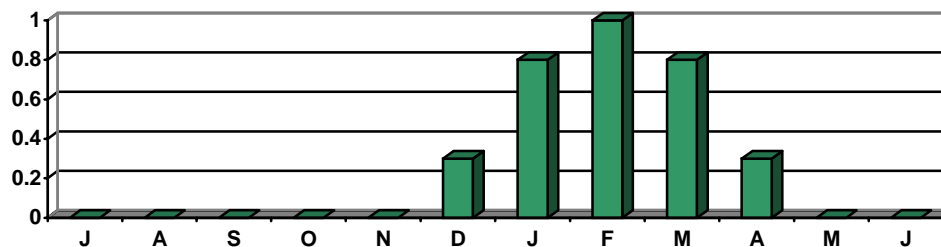
This is the latest gull to capture the imagination and enthusiasm of birders. This is the Herring Gull that mainly breeds from the eastern Mediterranean to the Caspian region and again there are strong claims for it to be considered a distinct species.

There have been several claims of it occurring at Chasewater, including a videoed second –winter bird on January 2nd 2004. All records need to be considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee before they can be formally accepted and anyone claiming one is encouraged to submit a detailed description to the BBRC.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
69/70							1					
70/71								1				
71/72							1	1				
72/73						1	1	1				
73/74						2	2	1				
74/75						1	2	2	2			
75/76					1	1						
76/77							1					
77/78									1			
78/79									1			
79/80								1				
80/81								1				
81/82						1		3	3			
82/83						1	1	2	1			
83/84						1	1	4	3	2		
84/85							1		1	1		
85/86							1		1	1		
86/87							1		1			
87/88							1	1	3	1		
88/89							1	1	1			
89/90					1							
90/91						1	1	2	1			
91/92							1	1	2			
92/93						1	1	1	1			
93/94						1	2	2	1		1	
94/95							1	1	1			
95/96						2	1	1	2	1		
96/97						1	2	2				
97/98							2	1	1			
98/99								1				
99/00							1	1	1	1		
00/01									1			
01/02								2	2	1		
02/03							1	1				
03/04												
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
10y/av	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.3	0	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).

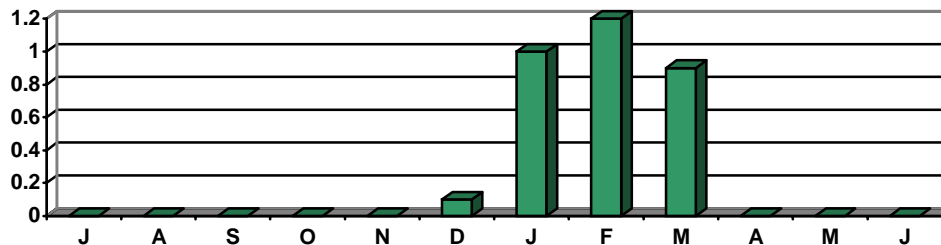


The occurrence of Iceland Gulls has been a feature of the Chasewater roost every year since 1970. During the early 80's they were far more regular than at present. As many as 6 1st or 2nd years were seen between February 14th and March 22nd 1982 and from January 23rd to April 17th 1984 up to 12 individual 1st or 2nd year birds were recorded with 4 together on February 8th-10th. Unfortunately, there have been no reports so far this winter.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
70/71					1	1	1	1				
71/72							1					
72/73						1	1					
73/74								1				
74/75							2	1	1			
75/76					1							
76/77							1					
77/78					1		1	1				
78/79						1	1		2	1		
79/80						1	4	4	1	2		
80/81						1	2	2	2	1		
81/82						1	2	3				
82/83						1	3	2				
83/84					1	2	2	3		1		
84/85							3					
85/86						2	4	4				
86/87					1	2	2	2	1			
87/88							3	1	2			
88/89							3	3	2			
89/90						2						
90/91							1	1				
91/92							1	1				
92/93						1	1					
93/94							1	2				
94/95								1	2			
95/96							1					
96/97							1	2	1			
97/98							2	2	1			
98/99						1	3	3	2			
99/00								1	1			
00/01							1	2	1			
01/02							1	1	1			
02/03												
03/04							1					
10y/av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	1.0	1.2	0.9	0	0	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).



The first record of Glaucous Gull was on November 21st 1970 and they have been regular every year since, apart from 2003. This recent scarcity contrasts greatly with the 1980's. The peak counts during this time included four roosting together from January 19th to February 26th 1980 and January 30th and February 8th 1986. During each of the 1982-83 and 1983-4 winters up to seven individuals were recorded. The majority of birds have been immature (mainly first-winter) and very few adults have occurred.

Herring x Glaucous Gull *Larus argentatus x hyperboreus*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
76/77							1					
77/78						1						
78/79												
79/80								1				
80/81												
81/82												
82/83												
83/84												
84/85							1+1		1			
85/86												
86/87									1			
87/88												
88/89												
89/90												
90/91												
91/92												
92/93												
93/94					1	1	1					
94/95						1	1					
95/96												
96/97												
97/98												
98/99												
99/00												
00/01												
01/02									1			
02/03												
03/04												
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
10y/av												

The pattern of occurrence of these birds, not surprisingly, mirrors that of apparently pure Glaucous Gulls. The origins of both Chasewater's Glaucous Gulls and the hybrids is not known but presumably there will be subtle differences between the appearance of Glaucous x *argentatus* and Glaucous x *argenteus* etc.

Most of the birds appear to have been first-winters but there have been two second-winters and one adult.

A second-winter bird on March 16th 1985 showed many of the features of Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* but had a pale iris which is wrong for this species and it had to be considered a Glaucous x Herring hybrid.

The only adult hybrid occurred in at least the two winters between 1993 and 95.

The last record was of a first-winter on March 3rd 2002.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

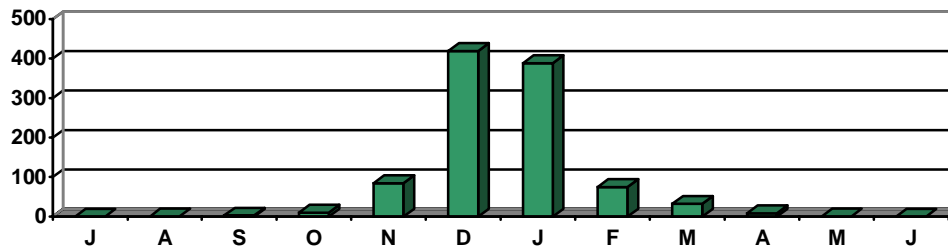
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
48/49						1						
49/50												
50/51												
51/52		1										
52/53												
53/54									1			
54/55		2			1							
55/56												
56/57												
57/58												
58/59												
59/60												
60/61												
61/62							1					
62/63												
63/64							1				1	
64/65												
65/66												
66/67						5						
67/68												
68/69												
69/70							5					
70/71												
71/72						7	15					
72/73						5						
73/74							20					
74/75					15	15			33			
75/76						27	73					
76/77							60					
77/78								40				
78/79								20				
79/80							60					

The WMBC Report for 1954 stated that Great Black-backed Gulls appeared occasionally at Cannock Reservoir (Chasewater) but they were clearly very scarce and did not roost at all frequently until the 70's, with the record count of 73 in January 1976.

Great Black-backed Gull 1980-04

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
80/81						50	115					
81/82						70						
82/83						120	75					
83/84											1	
84/85							185					
85/86							105		50	4		
86/87				16	55	181	390		17			
87/88							340		117	10		
88/89						283						
89/90					32	510						
90/91			5	18	58	300	530	34	47	-		
91/92				-	72	-	550	5	5	-		
92/93				-	-	18	142	10	-	-		
93/94			3	28	-	106	200	20	4	4		
94/95				15	50	142	380	40	21	-		
95/96				2	65	440	570	70	15	9	8	
96/97			2	10	50	300	300	50	18	1	1	
97/98				5	50	400	500	95	5	12		
98/99			2	25	70	460	450	50	25	14	14	1
99/00			1	8	100	500	250	60	45	17		
00/01			1	3	120	385	455	50	30	6		
01/02			6	15	70	375	365	160	47	2	1	
02/03			3	4	70	280	300	10	15	2		
03/04		2	2	20	60	560	575	97				
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
5y/av	0	0.4	2.6	10	84	420	389	75	32	8.2	0.2	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 5 years).



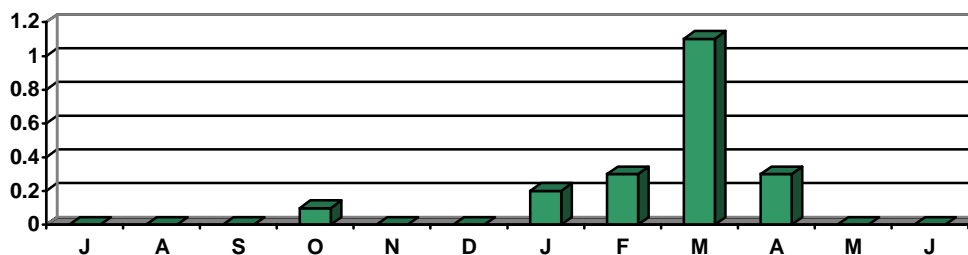
A dramatic increase in numbers occurred from 1987 and high numbers (mainly adults) have continued to be the norm during late December and early January with a record count of 575 being made on January 6th 2004.

Studies of Great Black-backed Gulls on the east coast in winter have shown them to be of Scandinavian origin and it seems likely that Chasewater's roosting birds are from the same populations. Their pattern of occurrence is remarkably similar to that of the Herring Gull and may indicate a similar place of origin for many of them.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
62/63												6
63/64												
64/65												
65/66												
66/67												
67/68					30				1		1	
68/69					1				2			
69/70		1		1		1				1		
70/71												
71/72					1					1		
72/73										1		
73/74		1								1	1	
74/75				1	1							
75/76							1		1			
76/77				1	1			1				
77/78			1									
78/79			2							1		
79/80												
80/81									5			
81/82							1		1			
82/83					1	2		1	1	1		
83/84						1	2	1		3		
84/85					2				1	1		
85/86								1	3	2		
86/87									1			
87/88									70			
88/89			1		1			1		1		
89/90												
90/91							1		1			
91/92					1				2			
92/93					3							
93/94										1		
94/95							1			1		
95/96									3			
96/97									3			
97/98								1	1			
98/99								1	1	1		
99/00									1			
00/01				1				1				
01/02									2			
02/03												
03/04							1					
10y/av	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	0.3	1.1	0.3	0	0

Average highest daily maxima for each month (last 10 years).



During the 60's and 70's Kittiwakes appeared to occur at any time of the year but usually during periods of strong south-westerlies. During the 80's there developed a tendency towards a more definite early spring passage of adults, including a record 70 on March 17th 1988. There have been signs of a recent decline although the spring peak remains. There were no records in 2003 but a first-winter bird roosted on January 16th 2004.

Footnote

These notes and observations are intended to encourage discussion amongst anyone with an interest in gulls. Anyone who can help to add to these notes or photos (taken at Chasewater only) is welcome to contact us on our email address.

References

Most of the data has been taken from my own records and the West Midland Bird Club's Annual Reports 1948-2001 and its book *The Birds of the West Midlands* (1982) by G. R. Harrison, A. R. Dean, A. J. Richards and D. Smallshire.

Graham Evans
March 2004