

TEST YOUR GULL ABILITY

By John Muir Laws

WESTERN GULL

Year-round resident
nests in the Bay Area

"school-bus yellow"
thick, hooked bill



GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL

Found year-round but
uncommon in summer

thick, heavy bill



HERRING GULL

September to May

flat forehead
thick, straight,
straw-colored bill
distinct red spot



THAYER'S GULL

October to March

rounded forehead
small bill
red spot may
be indistinct



CALIFORNIA GULL

Found year-round, some
nesting in the Bay Area

long, straight, narrow
bill with black, white,
& red bill tip



RING-BILLED GULL

Mostly fall-winter

black ring
shorter bill than
California



MEW GULL

September to May

rounded forehead
small, plain bill



BONAPARTE'S GULL

Found year-round

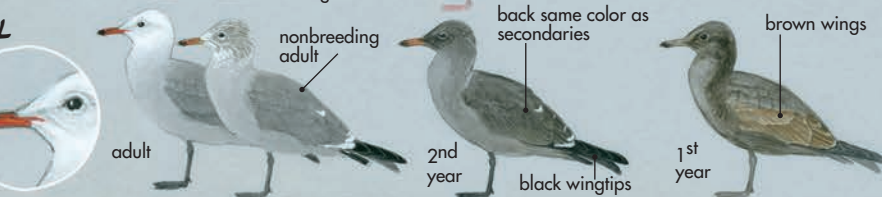
small, black,
tern-like bill



HEERMANN'S GULL

Mostly summer-fall

red-orange bill



The large species of gulls take four years to reach maturity, starting with brown plumage and slowly molting into adult grey and white feathers. Heermann's, ring-billed, and mew gulls take three years to reach maturity. Bonaparte's gulls mature in two years. Between molts, feathers fade and wear and may lose most of their color. Many gulls hybridize. A western x glaucous-winged is very common. Most adult gulls have brown-streaked heads in winter (shown) and white heads in summer.