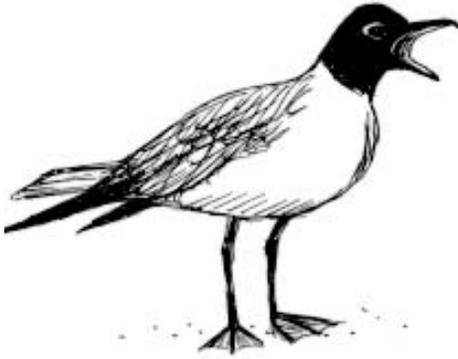


N.C. Plant and Animal Species Fact Sheets



Laughing gull (*Larus atricilla*)

Introduction

Aptly named after its call, which sounds like a series of loud "ha-haahs" It is the most common and abundant gull. Some folks refer to them as "seagulls" which is not considered correct as there are many species of gulls and if you stop and look you can see the differences.

What do they look like?

In the summer they have black hoods hood on their heads while in the winter they molt the hood and have white to grey heads.

How big are they?

They are generally 16-17 inches. (41cm-43cm)

Where do they live?

This gull is usually near the water; but can be seen inland as well.

Who eats them?

Herring gulls and great black backed gulls prey on laughing gull eggs and young as do foxes and raccoons.

What do they eat?

They tend to be scavengers but are also very aggressive feeders. A laughing gull will attack live crabs and also come close to humans that have food though human food is of poor quality for gulls.. They have been known to steal tern eggs and young. They will surface dive for fish.

How do they mate?

They are colonial nesters crowding together. Nesting is from late May to early August. The nest is a shallow depression, sometimes lined with grass or twigs on the sand bottom dunes or in salt marshes.

What are the young like?

The average clutch is 3 olive and buff eggs which hatch in 20 days. Young are usually dark brown and white.

People Interactions

Laughing gulls can become a nuisance around people who feed them. Once fed they continue to hang around waiting for an opportunity to snatch more food. Can be seen inland around trash dumps and parking lots.

EstuaryLive

www.EstuaryLive.org

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

www.ncnerr.org or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

www.cerf.us



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