

Rare Gulls and an Anniversary

There has been an influx of Sabine's Gulls recently in the seas around Pembrokeshire. You have probably not seen one because they have been out at sea and mostly seen from the islands or from Strumble Head. Which is a pity as they are probably the smartest of all gulls. They have a dark grey head with a black collar behind it, a black bill with a big yellow tip and a simply amazing wing pattern. A few



are seen most years passing by Strumble Head. They breed in the far north of America and Asia with a few in Greenland and Svalbard, then winter off the coasts of Africa and South America. I think it must be the Greenland/Svalbard birds we see as they pass this way on migration.

Exactly 20 years ago in November 2005 I wrote my first article for Peninsula Papers. It was also about a rare gull but this time it was seen at the Gann and stayed for a number of days. I thought you might like to read my contribution from November 2005:

“It cannot have escaped the notice of anybody living in these parishes that we have recently had a prolonged spell of wet and stormy weather. Whilst this can be miserable for most of us, it can be an exciting time for birdwatchers. This is because birds from America can get blown along by the storms and finish up in spots like Pembrokeshire. Usually the birds in question are migrating down the East coast of America when they get caught up in one of the big depressions which have been sweeping across the Atlantic.

On 6th November one such American visitor was spotted on an island in Pickleridge Pools. It was a Laughing Gull – a bit bigger than the Black Headed Gulls with dark legs and a heavy black bill. Much excitement was generated and pictures of this bird can now be seen on various “Birdy” web sites. In fact there were two individuals in the area – an adult and a “first winter” bird and they were around for several days. They looked quite content and healthy, but the question is “Will they ever get back to where they are supposed to be or are they destined to wander around on the wrong side of the Atlantic for ever?” My guess is that as gulls are long distance flyers which are happy out at sea, these gulls and the other Laughing Gulls which arrived in the western half of the UK at the same time, will eventually get to their correct winter destination.”

PS: I have just counted them up - I have written 175 Wildlife notes over the years since 2005 - mostly one per edition but occasionally somebody else contributes one. They can all be read on the Marloes website at <https://www.marloes.org.uk/page32.html> or simply go to the Marloes Website <https://www.marloes.org.uk/> and select the “Natural Environment” tab then select “Wildlife Notes from PP”. Happy reading!

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