

Protocol for Reporting Banded and Wing-tagged Gulls

Thank-you for helping us to learn more about the biology of gulls along the Atlantic coast of North America!



Figure 1. Leg bands on a gull.

There are two main types of marks used on gulls: leg bands and wing tags. Leg bands are shown in Figure 1. Typically, there is one plain metal band and one color band. The code on the metal band is quite small and very difficult to read in the field without specialized optics. Therefore, most researchers also use a colored band with an alpha-numeric code that is relatively easy to read in the field for anyone with binoculars (Figs. 2 & 3). These bands are called,

“field readable.” Field readable bands are made out of metal (Fig. 2) or plastic (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Metal field readable band on left leg.



Fig. 3 Plastic field readable band on right leg, “X47”

The other type of mark used on gulls is a wing tag (Figs. 4, 5 & 6). Wing tags are much larger than leg bands and, therefore, easy to read in the field. Most projects that use wing tags also use leg bands.



Figures 4 & 5. Wing-tagged gulls.



Fig. 6 Wing-tagged gull in flight

When you see a marked gull, please take a digital photo of it and record the following information in your datasheet:

- The date
- Band color and code (e.g., “red,” “X23”)
- Wing tag color and code *Note: for birds with both wing tags and leg bands: if you can read the wing tag, but not the leg band (this can happen if you only see the bird in flight or from a great distance), simply record the wing tag and don’t worry about the leg band. The researchers will still know the individual based on its wing tag*
- Name (if known) and brief description of location where gull was observed (e.g. rock jetty, mud flat, on deck of boat, etc)
- Latitude and Longitude
- Notes – interesting behaviors of gull, other observations

Final note: There is a “special” gull that was banded on Appledore Island, Maine in 2008. We are particularly interested in knowing whether this bird is still alive and where it is located. This gull is a Lesser Black-backed Gull and has the band code, “F05” (Figure 6). It is a species that arose in Europe and has expanded its breeding range in recent years to Iceland and Greenland. We found F05 in 2007 on Appledore mated to a Herring Gull; the pair successfully fledged two chicks that year. This represents the first confirmed breeding record for a Lesser Black-backed



Gull in North America!

F05 returned to breed on Appledore every summer from 2007 – 2011. In 2012, he did not return. So, we are especially interested in knowing where he is (if he is still alive). Lesser Black-backed Gulls look similar to Great Black-backed Gulls except they are much smaller (a little smaller than a Herring Gull) and they have yellow legs instead of pink ones.

Thank-you for your help!!