Restricted moult in second calendar-year Baltic Gull

On 25 June 2005, a ringed second calendar-year Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* was present at the Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, the Netherlands (52:22 N, 04:50 E). The bird was colour-ringed (red CRK4) as a nestling at Pietarsaari, Vaasa, Finland (63:38 N, 22:30 E), in the core of the breeding range of Baltic Gull. Baltic Gull has a turbulent history on the Dutch list. Hoogendoorn & van Scheepen (1998) analyzed the recoveries of metal-ringed birds from Finland and Sweden and concluded that none of the seven records met the standards for acceptance. Subsequently, these records from 1930-78 were rejected (Wiegant et al 1998). Following the decision of the CDNA only to accept ringed birds of proven provenance (van Duijvendijk 2004), another nine previously accepted records from 1992-2000 were recently removed from the list (van der Vliet et al 2004). If accepted, CRK4 therefore will represent only the fourth record for the Netherlands (cf van der Vliet et al 2005). A fifth colour-ringed bird from Finland has not yet been submitted to the CDNA (Risto Juvaste & Martin Brandsma in litt). Table 1 summarizes the recoveries of ringed Baltic Gulls of proven provenance in the Netherlands. Hereafter, *L f fuscus* is referred to as *fuscus* and the western Lesser Black-backed Gull taxa *L f graellsii* and *L f intermedius* as *graellsii* and *intermedius*, respectively.

STRUCTURE Small and slender built second calendar-year Lesser Black-backed Gull sensu lato, notably when directly compared to local Lesser Black-backed Gulls.
HEAD Densely streaked, especially around eye, towards crown and on hindneck.
UPPERPARTS & WING Mantle and scapular region with mixture of worn brown-grey and fresh plain slate grey feathers. Brown-grey feathers non-juvenile, with obvious dark shaft or centre and pale edges worn off. Fresh mantle-feathers adult-like but dark grey, not blackish. Upper lesser and greater coverts brown and worn (juvenile feathers). Innermost greater and inner median coverts brown-grey non-juvenile feathers with dark shaft and pale tip worn off. Outer median and lower lesser coverts plain slate-grey; in right wing some fresher feathers also in inner median covert tract. Upper three tertials in left wing dark brown with broad white tip, lower three retained paler brown feathers. In right wing, upper tertial missing, next two renewed and lower feathers juvenile. Several greater coverts in right wing damaged and exposing juvenile secondaries. All visible remiges retained juvenile feathers.
UNDERPARTS Throat and belly white but breast and especially flank rather densely blotched.
TAIL All rectrices juvenile, with worn brown tips.
BARE PARTS Bill dark but paler at base and at tip. Eye dark but iris dark brown, not black. Leg greyish pink.
VOICE No calls heard.
BEHAVIOUR Mainly resting and sleeping in group of c 150 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and European Herring Gulls *L argentatus*.
MOULT First complete moult just started: inner two or three primaries had been dropped. Active moult in wing-coverts, tertials and scapulars.

First-winter *fuscus* usually undergoes an extensive moult at the wintering grounds, including scapulars, wing-coverts, rectrices and most or all remiges. Subsequently, many of the second calendar-year birds observed in Europe the next summer already look surprisingly adult-like (Jonsson 1998, Gruber 1999, Rauste 1999, Gibbins 2004, plate 219 and 221 in Koskinen & Rauste 2006). Moult in the winter quarters is typically much more restricted in the western taxa. In spring, second calendar-year *graellsii* and *intermedius* return with renewed scapulars and wing-coverts. Observations of ringed birds indicate that many *intermedius* and some *graellsii* also renew some or all rectrices in their first winter (Gibbins 2004, Luijendijk et al in prep).

Lesser Black-backed Gulls of proven western origin that have replaced primaries in their first winter have

TABLE 1 Recoveries in the Netherlands of Baltic Gulls *Larus fuscus fuscus* colour-ringed as nestlings in Finland.

White C364
Ringed: Kerimäki, Mikkeli, Finland (61:91 N, 29:39 E), 7 July 1995
Observed: North Sea beach, Paal 6, Vlieland, Friesland, Netherlands (52:42 N, 04:57 E), 18 December 2001
Elapsed time: six years, five months, 12 days; distance: 1733 km

White CJM5*
Ringed: Luopio, Häme, Finland (61:34 N, 24:71 E), 29 June 1998
Observed: Brunstingerplas, Beilen, Drenthe, Netherlands (52:87 N, 06:52 E), 20 April 2002
Elapsed time: three years, nine months, 21 days; distance: 1443 km
* Not yet submitted to CDNA

White C09K
Ringed: Savonlinna, Mikkeli, Finland (62.14N 28.50E), 12 July 1996
Observed: North Sea beach, IJmuiden, Noord-Holland, Netherlands (52:42 N, 04:57 E), 20 September 2002 (Cottaar 2005)
Elapsed time: six years, two months, nine days; distance: 1782 km

White CXVA
Ringed: Hauho, Häme, Finland (61.27N 24.61E), 1 July 2004
Observed: Zeedijk, Westkapelle, Zeeland, Netherlands (51:53 N, 03:43 E), 16 October 2004 (cf Dutch Birding 27: 76, plate 94, 2005).
Elapsed time: three months, 16 days; distance: 1686 km

Red CRK4*
Ringed: Pietarsaari, Vaasa, Finland (63:63 N, 22:50 E), 10 July 2004
Observed: Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands (52:38 N, 04:83 E), 25 June 2005
Elapsed time: 11 months, 15 days; distance: 1620 km
* Under consideration by CDNA

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223 Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus*, second calendar-year, colour-ring red CRK4, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 25 June 2005 *(Ruud G M Altenburg)*. A densely streaked head is uncommon in second calendar-year *fuscus* in spring. Small and slender built when compared with Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L f graellsii/'intermedius'* in background. **224** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus*, second calendar-year, colour-ring red CRK4, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 25 June 2005 *(Ruud G M Altenburg)*. Many greater coverts, lesser coverts in carpal edge (see also plate 225) and lower three tertials still juvenile. Juvenile rectrices worn with brown tips. **225** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus*, second calendar-year, colour-ring red CRK4, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 25 June 2005 *(Ruud G M Altenburg)*. Note brown juvenile remiges. Innermost primaries have been shed. **226** Lesser Black-backed Gull / Kleine Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus intermedius*, second calendar-year, ring NOS 4105943, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 10 July 2005 *(Ruud G M Altenburg)*. Ringed as pullus at Store Revlingen, Rygge, Østfold, Norway (59:24 N, 10:38 E). Note overall similarity to CRK4, compared with which this Norwegian *intermedius* is more advanced in moult.

not yet been recorded. Any second calendar-year Lesser Black-backed showing renewed primaries but no active moult in spring should therefore be considered a candidate *fuscus* (Jonsson 1998, Gibbins 2004, Altenburg 2006, Winters 2006). Birds such as CRK4 demonstrate that the opposite is not true: a second calendar-year bird showing very restricted moult is not necessarily of western origin. Jonsson (1998) and Rauste (1999) have already discussed the problem of identifying second calendar-year *fuscus* returning in spring with unmoulted wings. In this issue of Dutch Birding, Koskinen & Rauste (2006) summarize the moult scores of 53 ringed second calendar-year *fuscus* observed in Finland. Five or six of these (about 10%) had returned to Europe with a moult pattern comparable to CRK4 (plate 217 in Koskinen & Rauste 2006). Unlike CRK4, however, most of these retarded birds had replaced at least some rectrices (Hannu Koskinen & Visa Rauste in litt).

CRK4 matches the moult pattern outlined for *graellsii* and *intermedius*. Structurally and plumage-wise too, it looks virtually identical to some *intermedius* (plate 4). Gibbins (2004) provided a similar case study of nearly identical second calendar-year *fuscus* and *intermedius*. Comparable problems occur when separating certain types of second calendar-year Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini* from *graellsii* or *intermedius* in spring

(Gibbins 2004, Visa Rauste in litt). Without a ring to prove its origin, it therefore may be extremely difficult or even impossible to positively identify an out-of-range second calendar-year western Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Else Aasland and Morten Helberg of the Norwegian ringing office provided the life history of NOS4105943. Petteri Lehikoinen and Seppo Niiranen of the Finnish ringing office and especially Risto Juvaste are thanked for the life history data of CRK4 and the other Finnish birds.

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Recensies

PETER MARLER & HANS SLABBEKOORN 2004. *Nature's music. The science of birdsong*. Elsevier Academic Press, 84 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8RR, UK; website www.elsevier.com. 504 pp, with two audio CDs. ISBN 0-12-473070-1. GBP 49.95 / EUR 74.95 / USD 74.95.

Nature's music gives an excellent overview of the state of the art on birdsong research around its publication date, October 2004. In the course of 14 different chapters, a total of 18 leading experts cover subjects ranging from how songs are learned to the wiring of a songbird's brain. In addition, these authors and more have provided a total of 48 'boxes' giving short explanations of a variety of specific subjects. Much of this is illustrated by examples on two accompanying audio CDs, as well as by sonagrams and a variety of other graphs and line illustrations, so that very few pages are without an illustration of some kind. A curious feature is the inclusion of some colour plates with portraits of singing birds; these are poorly printed, and not positioned close to text about the species concerned, so this seems like something of a throwaway feature.

The 18 authors are mainly European and North American (of the editors, Marler is a Brit who has based for a long time in the USA and Slabbekoorn is based in the Netherlands), and this is reflected to a large extent in the choice of examples, the emphasis changing per chapter according to who wrote it. Some attention is also given to non-Holarctic species, especially in 'singing in the wild: the ecology of birdsong' by Hans Slabbekoorn, about how song design changes according to the soundscape. From the point of view of a European birder, one of the most pertinent chapters is the one on 'vocal fighting and flirting: the functions of birdsong' by Sarah Collins. Illustrated almost entirely with European examples, it explores the conflicting needs of singing to repel rivals and to attract mates, often at the same time. Although she gives a good overview of the issues involved, Collins includes so many caveats that I am not sure I was left with a much clearer understanding (some of the same subjects are more clearly explained in chapter four 'the diversity and plasticity of birdsong' by Don Kroodsma). The third chapter, 'learning to sing' by Henrike Hultsch and Dietmar Todt, is largely based on a huge body of German research on nightingales *Luscinia*, and makes for a fascinating read. This chapter includes much discussion about subsong and plastic song, with several different stages in the song development of Common Nightingale *L megarhynchos*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana* illustrated nicely on one of the accompanying CDs. Chapter five 'bird calls: a cornucopia for communication' is the only one devoted to calls rather than songs. It is a stimulating chapter, and an important one for birders who would like to understand something about the great variety of messages communicated by sounds outside the singing season.

Perhaps the most fascinating chapter for me was 'how birds sing and why it matters' by Roderick A Suthers. I already knew that birds have two vocal organs or syrinxes, one for each lung, but I had no idea of the amazing ways that they co-ordinate the use of these organs. In long, seamlessly rising or falling notes of Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*, for example, the lower parts of one and the same note are produced by the left syrinx and higher parts produced by the right. A join can only be heard in young birds that have not yet mastered the co-ordination.

The book is a valiant attempt to write for a broad public by scientists more accustomed to writing (to most of us) somewhat impenetrable scientific papers. So have they succeeded? With varying success, on the whole I would say yes: the motivated and curious reader will certainly appreciate this publication. I got completely lost only once, and that was in the chapter 'brains and birdsong' by Erich D Jarvis, partly because it introduced so many new terms, far removed from my experience of bird sounds, but perhaps also because of a sense of unease about the intrusive techniques by which the information was obtained. Having said that, I did learn that research on bird