

Thayer's Gull *Larus thayeri*

Thayer's Gull nests in the Canadian Arctic and winters mainly along the Pacific coast north of San Diego. In San Diego County it is annual but rare—now far less numerous than before the exclusion of gulls from landfills.

Winter: Currently, Thayer's Gull is almost exclusively coastal in San Diego County, and considerably more frequent in the southern half of the county than in the north. From 1997 to 2002 we had only two reports of as many as three individuals, at Los Peñasquitos Lagoon (N7) 26 December 1999 (B. C. Moore) and at Border Field State Park (W10) 18 December 1999 (S. Walens). Though the species was formerly regular at landfills in the coastal lowland, the only inland sightings during the atlas period were of single birds at Lindo Lake (O14/P14) 20–25 January 2002 (R. T. Patton, M. B. Stowe), Santee Lakes (P12) 21 February 1998 (J. L. Coatsworth), Lower Otay Lake (U13/U14) 20 January and 13 December 2001 (S. Buchanan, P. Unitt), and the Dairy Mart pond, Tijuana River valley (V11), 16 December 2000 (G. McCaskie).



Photo by Richard E. Webster

Migration: Thayer's Gulls arrive in late October or early November; their numbers increase during November and December, peak in January and February, and decline during March (Devillers et al. 1971). The extreme dates listed by Unitt (1984), 17 October and 10 April, apparently still stand.

Conservation: The estimate reported by Devillers et al. (1971), of 100 to 150 wintering in the San Diego area, is obsolete. The driving of gulls from the county's garbage dumps decimated Thayer's. The closing of a former favored site, a pig farm near the Otay dump, did not help either.

Taxonomy: Thayer's Gull is evidently conspecific with the Iceland Gull (Snell 2002). Under the broader species concept, the name for Thayer's Gull depends on the disposition of the name applied to the intermediate populations: *kumlieni* Brewster, 1883, antedates *thayeri* Brooks, 1915.

