

Norfolk Records Committee Description Submission Form

Species: Sabine's Gull	
Date first seen: 29/10/17	Date last seen: 29/10/17
No. of Birds: One	Age/Sex: 1cy
Location: Salthouse	
Finder: P. M Wilson	
Identifier (if different): As above	Email:
Submitter (if different): As above	Email:
Other observers:	
Any who disagrees with identification? No	
Optical aids: 20-60x scope	
Distance from bird: Not accustomed to judging distances at sea – perhaps 500m or more?	
Have you attached photographs? No	Was the bird videoed? No
If photos are available on websites then please give address: N/A	
Have the photographs been published in magazines? If so, where: N/A	
Species present for comparison: Kittiwake (201 during seawatch)	
Which species were alongside the bird: No bird alongside	
Observer(s) experience of the species: A small number observed in Britain since 26th August 1984	
Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously Familiar with Kittiwake, Black-headed Gull, Little Gull etc.	
Weather : Squally showers becoming less frequent (?) – mostly cloudy	
Wind direction and Force: Strong north-westerlies	
Light conditions (good, dull, etc & sun behind, side etc): Sun behind observer, reasonable light.	
Visibility (distance): Fair-good	
Address of submitter:	
Phone No:	
And finally, is the record 100% certain? Yes	

In your description please include the following:

1. Circumstances of finding the bird (if applicable) but keep it brief
2. Plumage, bare parts etc and call (if possible)
3. Jizz (that 'indefinable something' about the way it behaved)

Description: Starting seawatching at 07.00 it was clear that auks (largely Guillemots) were predominant along with modest numbers of Gannets and, by 07.10 a handful of Kittiwakes. At 07.10 a distant small gull appeared in the scope moving west. Although rather distant and in difficult viewing conditions due to a slight shaking of the scope and the heavy swell I was able to follow the bird's course for about one minute, maybe a little more, when it was lost to view. Despite views I was confident of the bird's identity. I had been fortunate to see two Sabine's Gulls at Pendeen, Cornwall, just 7 days previously – an adult plus a 1cy, infact the latter I called out.

Behaviour: The flight manner was immediately eye-catching and even now I couldn't say whether it was this or the plumage (perhaps a simultaneous register) that grabbed my attention. Light and unhurried, almost meandering with two vertical drops to the water's surface during the period of observation. In comparison all but one Kittiwake went through with purpose, with the majority in the first two hours passing west hurriedly and almost shearing into the north-west wind. The flight action of this bird was just as the 1cy off Pendeen, which similarly was alone and not 'attached' to Kittiwakes (though the adult on that day was). While flight action is certainly not diagnostic it seems so often the case, at least in my experience, that Sab's Gull conveys a lighter, less purposeful flight than Kittiwake.

Size & structure: Clearly a small gull but no other gull was close by to make a direct comparison. Thought to be smaller than Kittiwake but probably that's just because I knew what I was looking at. Rather neat body 'carried' on longish, ample wings showing pointed hand.

Plumage: Striking upperwing pattern showing white inner primaries / secondaries, black outer primaries and dark brown coverts curving to carpal. The pattern is always shocking and delightful when the species is infrequently seen (as is my experience). While on occasion I find 1cy Kittiwakes can appear to exhibit this upperwing pattern on initial views, on this particular seawatch I was never swayed by any (including distant) young Kittiwakes. Perhaps the light was just right or (less likely) I had my 'eye in'. The dark brown (appearing dark brown at distance) upperparts spilled over the head which appeared dark at range. The underparts and tail appeared white. The tail band was not visible. At long range a sweep of dark brown on the underwing, 'shadowing' the rear of the dark coverts above, was surprisingly noticeable.

Bareparts: Not visible.

Continue on an extra sheet if necessary.