

## FEATHER FRAME

### PALLAS'S GULL *Larus ichthyaetus*

Jaysukh Parekh Suman: 'Shilp', Plot no. 19-A, Vardhman Nagar, Hospital Road, Bhuj – Kachchh 370001. nisusuman@gmail.com

The Pallas's Gull (*Larus Ichthyaetus*) is a widespread winter visitor in India. It is seen along the coast as well as in inland lakes and wetlands in Gujarat. This species takes three-(four) years to attain adult plumage and has noticeable changes in its plumage from juvenile to adult.

While photographing waders in coastal Kachchh, I have had the opportunity to photograph numerous Pallas's Gulls in different plumages. I present here a few photos to illustrate the tail pattern in Pallas's Gull at different ages; juveniles have a distinct tail-bar, while adults have an all white tail. There is variable amount of black in the tail in second- and third-year birds. The all white tail is attained over successive moults and by the third or fourth year, adult plumage is attained.

As per Malling Olsen (2018), juvenile/first winter has tail with clear cut, narrow, dark sub-terminal band, second winter has black tail-bar narrower than in first-winter birds, with black generally restricted to central tail, third winter has tail with traces of dark, mostly as dark spots in mid-tail, while full adults have an all white tail.

Photo 1: Juvenile/first-winter with distinct black tail-bar.

Photo 2: A possible second-year bird with adult. Note that black in tail still fairly prominent in the bird on the left but is narrower than in first-winter birds while the bird on the right is an adult with all white tail.

Photo 3: Possible third-winter bird with black in tail only seen in two tail feathers. Note how black spots are smaller and seen only in mid-tail.

Photo 4: Adult with all white tail and less black in wings.

We can see here how the tail changes with age. Though there is a lot of variation in tail pattern in Pallas's Gull till it becomes an adult, the four photos presented here give an indication of changing tail pattern over successive moults.

#### References

Malling Olsen, K., 2018. *Gulls of the world: A photographic guide*. Christopher Helm, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, UK. □

