



87 Mongolian Gulls / Mongoolse Meeuwen *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, Maloye More, north-western Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, June 1992 (Pierre Yésou)

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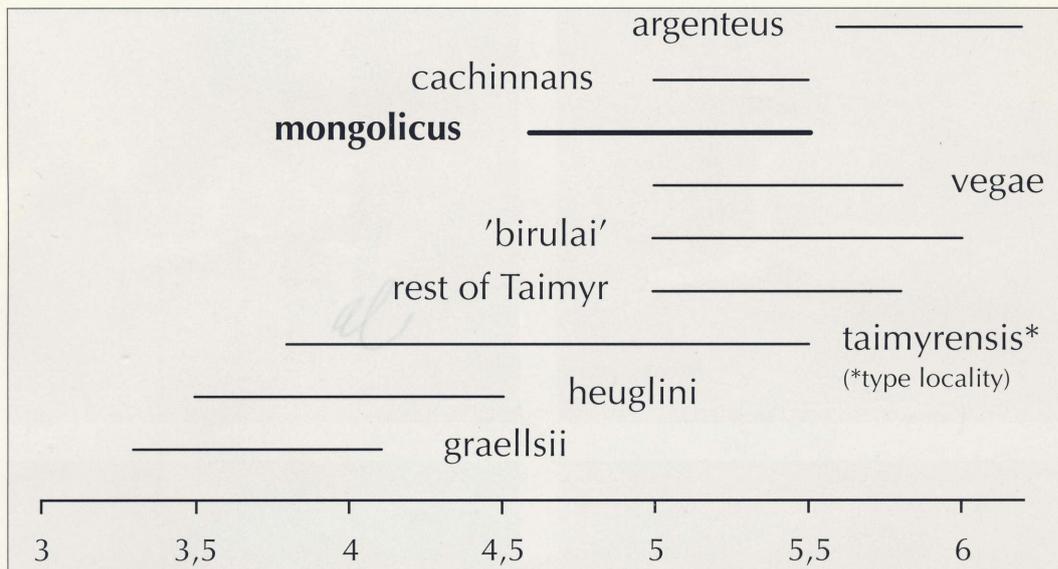


FIGURE 1 Munsell's index (37-step scale) of colour refraction of mantle colour for selected Palearctic taxa of *Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* complex. Darkness of grey mantle decreases from left to right. Only specimens of range given in type description, ie, lower reaches of Yenisei river in south-western Taimyr, have been included in Taimyr Gull *L. (heuglini) taimyrensis*. Specimens used for Birula Gull *L. vegae birulai* came from western Yakutia and east to Kolyma delta, those for Vega Gull *L. vegae* from east of Kolyma river to Chukchi peninsula. *Argenteus*, not representing a valid subspecies according to Dutch committee for avian systematics (CSNA) (Sangster et al 1999), refers to western and paler population of Herring Gull *L. argentatus*. Data from Barth (1966) and by courtesy of Andrey Filchagov (in litt) and Sergey Pyzhianov (in litt)

Results

Overall appearance

Mongolicus is a large and heavy gull, with a mean weight of 1140 g at the time of incubation (880-1580 g, n = 11, unsexed). The wingspan, calculated from freshly dead birds (positioned as live birds), is 140-160 cm (with four females ranging from 138

to 146 cm and five males from 146 to 156 cm). Further measurements are given in table 1.

It is a large-chested, broad-necked and large-billed bird. The bulky appearance is partly tempered as the birds often stand rather upright on their long legs while the long wings give them an attenuated rear body.

The mantle is mid-grey, with Munsell's index of colour refraction ranging from 4.5 to 5.5 in 32 birds of Lake Baikal (Sergey Pyzhianov pers comm). This means that *mongolicus* is distinctly paler than *heuglini*, the mantle colour of many birds matching that of *cachinnans* as well as that of many *vegae* (including *birulai*) and *taimyrensis* (figure 1).

The wing-tip is among the darkest of the Asian taxa: usually seven (ranging from six to nine) outer primaries show black, sometimes extending onto the outermost coverts. There are two white mirrors, less often only one. Large white scapular and tertial crescents (13-27 and 19-42 mm wide, respectively, in 44 birds) are shown on the folded wing. The rest of the plumage is white, except for the pale grey underwing.

In contrast to the well-marked winter plumage

TABLE 1 Measurements (mm) of 42 adult (unsexed) Mongolian Gulls *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus* trapped at nests at Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, on 2-26 June 1992. Two different measurements of tarsus were taken: 1 from centre of both joints as usually done on skins ('museum'); and 2 from outer extremity of both articulations which is most convenient way when measuring live birds ('field')

	Range	Mean \pm SD
Culmen	48.0-61.7	54.9 \pm 3.0
Gonys height	16.6-22.0	19.0 \pm 1.4
Head plus bill length	115-139	126.3 \pm 6.1
Tarsus (museum)	63.2-79.3	68.9 \pm 3.2
Tarsus (field)	67.8-87.8	80.5 \pm 3.9
Folded wing	432-494	458.5 \pm 14.8



89-91 Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, adult, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, June 1992 (Pierre Yésou). Note distinct white trailing edge to wing **92** Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, adult, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, June 1992 (Pierre Yésou). Note contrast between pale grey coverts, darker grey band formed by bases of remiges and white (almost translucent) trailing edge to wing

of *vegae* and birds of Taimyr, *mongolicus* only shows poorly developed dark streaks on the head after the post-breeding moult (Dement'ev 1951). Birds still present at Lake Baikal in November show a virtually all-white head and neck (Sergey Pyzhianov pers comm).

The bill is yellow with a red gonydeal spot and shows variable dark markings. The iris varies from yellowish-white to dark grey-brown and the legs from pale flesh to bright orange. All these variations, and those in the wing-tip pattern, will be detailed in the next paragraphs.

Wing-tip pattern

According to a study of 89 adult-plumaged birds in the hand in colonies at Lake Baikal (an exam-

ination of museum skins did not result in additional information), at least some black occurs on the six (p5-10) to nine outermost primaries (p2-10), most often on the seven outermost ones (p4-10), with a different number of black-tipped primaries in the two wings in c 10% of the birds (table 2). The black extends onto some or all outermost primary-coverts in 25 out of 84 birds with black on at least seven outer primaries. Such an extension of black onto the outer coverts (which otherwise always have a black shaft) was not observed in birds with only six black-tipped primaries. This could, however, be explained by the sample size. The proportion of adult birds with at least some black markings on the outer coverts is c 30%. Due to both the number of