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## Moult sequence in second calendar-year Baltic Gull at Amsterdam in May 2006

From 25 to 27 May 2006, a second calendar-year Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* was present at Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It had been colour-ringed ('red CJC9') on 28 June 2006 as a 'young out of the nest' at Pori, Finland (61:39 N 21:23 E), a location within the breeding range of Baltic Gull (cf Olsen & Larsson 2004). Prior to being recorded in Amsterdam, it had been observed in Anza, Agadir, Morocco, on 23 February 2006 (Seppo Niiranen in litt). If accepted by the Dutch rarities committee (CDNA), CJC9 will become the sixth Baltic Gull for the Netherlands. Altenburg et al (2006) provided an overview of the previous records (only birds colour-ringed as pullus from known provenance are considered acceptable, on current view). This paper presents a description, discusses the identification and puts CJC9's moult pattern into a wider perspective. Hereafter, *L f fuscus* is referred to as *fuscus*; the western Lesser Black-backed Gull taxa *L f graellsii* and *L f intermedius* are referred to as *graellsii* and *intermedius*, respectively.

The description is based on field notes by Ruud Altenburg and photographs by RA, Arnoud van den Berg, Ronald van Dijk, Jan den Hertog, Jan van der Laan and Theo Muusse.

**STRUCTURE** Long-winged, small and slenderly built second calendar-year Lesser Black-backed Gull *sensu lato*.

**HEAD** White with fine streaking around eye, on crown and on ear-coverts.

**UPPERPARTS** Scapulars dark grey or brown-grey, some with and some without dark brown shaft-streaks and bold markings. Rearmost scapulars dark brown, with broad white tip and dark subterminal markings, similar to second-generation tertials.

**UNDERPARTS** Throat and belly white; chest side and flank very sparsely blotched. Undertail-coverts very sparsely spotted.

**WING** Innermost greater, median and lesser coverts brown-grey non-juvenile feathers with dark shaft and slightly worn pale tip. Most median coverts fresh, with pale edges and some with obvious internal markings. Remaining upperwing-coverts

worn juvenile feathers; especially central greater coverts abraded to pale brown. Upper four tertials in left wing dark brown with broad white tip, lower two retained paler brown feathers. In right wing, upper two tertials renewed, third tertial apparently growing and lower three juvenile. All secondaries juvenile. Inner four primaries and corresponding coverts in both wings fully grown blackish-grey second-generation feathers, in flight clearly contrasting with dark brown secondaries and retained outer six primaries.

**TAIL** All tail-feathers juvenile, with worn brown tip. Rump and uppertail-coverts almost white, with few dark markings on central feathers.

**BARE PARTS** Bill dark but slightly paler at base. Eye dark; iris dark brown, not black. Leg greyish-pink.

**VOICE** No calls heard.

**BEHAVIOUR** Often actively feeding on bread among Lesser Black-backed Gulls and European Herring Gulls *L argentatus*.

**MOULT** No signs of active moult except for single growing tertial.

The identification of CJC9 as *fuscus* is straightforward, as this is the only taxon of Lesser Black-backed Gull breeding in Finland (cf Olsen & Larsson 2004). It is interesting to test if this bird would have been identifiable as *fuscus* had it not been wearing a colour ring. Its small size, slender built and very long wings point to *fuscus*, but by no means exclude *intermedius*. In fact, the combination of rather pale grey scapulars, well-marked second-generation wing-coverts and a restricted post-juvenile moult better fit the average *intermedius* than *fuscus*. First-winter *fuscus* have a very variable moult. The most advanced birds returning from the wintering grounds to Europe are more than a full moult cycle ahead of the slowest moulting individuals (Rauste 1999, Koskinen & Rauste 2006). Only a small portion of the *fuscus* returning to Finland in their second calendar-year show a moult comparable to CJC9 (cf Koskinen & Rauste 2006). While CJC9 is inseparable from *intermedius* when perched, it does reveal an essential character in flight: on the wintering grounds, it has replaced the inner primaries. In this respect it differs from all known-age second calendar-year *graellsii* and *intermedius* recorded so far (Gibbins 2004, Winters 2006, pers obs).



**119** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus* (CJC9), second calendar-year, Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 25 May 2006 (Ronald van Dijk). This bird shows restricted moult for *fuscus*: many lesser and greater coverts are still worn juvenile feathers. **120** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus* (CJC9), second calendar-year, Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 25 May 2006 (Theo O V Muisse) **121** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus* (CJC9), second calendar-year, Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 25 May 2006 (Arnoud B van den Berg). Note second-generation inner primaries (p1-4). All tail-feathers, secondaries and outer primaries (p5-10) are retained juvenile feathers. **122** Baltic Gull / Baltische Mantelmeeuw *Larus fuscus fuscus*, second calendar-year, Al Hadd, Bahrain, 5 March 1999 (Martin Reid). This bird had been colour-ringed in Finland. It is actively replacing wing-coverts, primaries and tail-feathers; all secondaries are still juvenile.

Second calendar-year Lesser Black-backed Gulls *sensu lato* observed in spring and summer in western Europe also show highly variable moult patterns. Winters (2006) used these patterns to reconstruct the moult sequence in juvenile/first-winter birds and deduced that first the tail-feathers are renewed, then the secondaries and finally the primaries. This sequence is different from the first complete moult taking place in the summer of the second calendar-year, in which the inner primaries are replaced first. Only when approximately half of the primaries have been renewed will the replacement of rectrices and secondaries begin. Extrapolating the moult patterns of birds he observed in the Netherlands to *fuscus*, Winters (2006) concluded that

'Altogether, all [second calendar-year] birds seem to perform the same moult but at different times and locations and of varying extent. From this point of view, the complete moult of many *fuscus* during the first winter is best regarded as a 'normal' but exceptionally extensive first moult rather than a time-shifted complete moult'. the complete moult of many *fuscus* during the first winter is best regarded as a 'normal' but exceptionally extensive first moult rather than a time-shifted complete moult'.

However, the replaced inner primaries but retained juvenile tail-feathers and secondaries of CJC9 suggest a sequence that is in line with the first stage of the complete moult. Plate 122 of a *fuscus* photographed in Bahrain indicates that CJC9 is no exception. Another

example is plate 534 in Olsen & Larsen (2004), which shows a bird from Israel that has dropped p6 and is actively moulting wing-coverts; its visible secondaries are juvenile. Furthermore, CJC9 is not the only second calendar-year *fuscus* returning to Europe with a moult that does not fit the patterns seen in *graellsii/intermedius*. For example, the bird depicted in plate 36 and 38 in Rauste (1999) has replaced its inner primaries but retained its juvenile secondaries, while the tail-feathers are being replaced with second generation ones (Visa Rauste in litt).

We conclude that the moult pattern shown by CJC9 is different from that of most Lesser Black-backed Gulls observed in western Europe. However, it must be stressed that moult patterns should be interpreted with great care, because patterns reveal only the final result of a moult, not the sequence itself. This problem is particularly important to bear in mind when trying to infer the moult sequence of the most advanced birds seen in spring/summer of their second calendar-year. Given the paucity of observations from the wintering grounds, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about the frequency of the moult sequence shown by CJC9 and which seems to be unique to *fuscus*. Nonetheless, a study of photographs in the literature and on web sites indicates that it is likely to occur more frequently than presumed by Winters (2006). CJC9 apparently has wintered among *graellsii* and

*intermedius* in Morocco. Although the extent of its moult is comparable to those taxa, intriguingly its moult sequence appears not to be.

Visa Rauste and Hannu Koskinen provided valuable data and never got tired of discussing large gulls, both for this paper and the previous one on CRK4. Risto Juvaste is responsible for the colour-ringing project of *fuscus* in Finland. Seppo Niiranen of the Finnish ringing office is thanked for the information about the ring recovery. Chris Gibbins and Martin Reid have commented on the manuscript.

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## CDNA-mededelingen

**Recente CDNA-besluiten** Op de wintervergadering van de Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna (CDNA) op 27 februari 2007 zijn onder andere de volgende besluiten genomen. Maar liefst zeven (onder)soorten zijn bekrachtigd als nieuwe taxa voor de Nederlandse lijst: Buffelkopeend *Bucephala albeola* (IJmeerdiijk, Almere, Flevoland, en Muiden, Noord-Holland, vanaf 5 november 2004; daarna op diverse andere locaties en terugkerend in de winters van 2006/06 en 2006/07); Amerikaanse Bosruiter *Tringa solitaria* (Wissenkerke, Zeeland, 14-17 mei 2006; aanvaard als ondersoort *T s solitaria*); Dunbekmeeuw *Larus genei* (De Kreupel en Medemblik, Noord-Holland, 5-6 mei 2006 (maximaal drie); gevolgd door twee exemplaren op 6 mei (Groede, Zeeland) en twee op 6-9 mei (Dollard, Groningen)); Kumliens Meeuw *L glaucoides kumlieni* (Terschelling, Friesland, 29 januari 2005); Oostelijke Baardgrasmus *Sylvia cantillans albistriata* (Uithof, Den Haag, Zuid-Holland, 28 mei 2004); Zanggors *Melospiza melodia* (Kabbelaarsbank, Zuid-Holland, 30 april 2006; aanvaard als behorend tot de nominaat-groep); en Geelkoptroepiaal *Xanthocephalus*

*xanthocephalus* (Terschelling, 2-3 juli 1982).

Besloten is om Kleinst Waterhoen *Porzana pusilla* af te voeren van de lijst van beoordeelsoorten, met ingang van 1 januari 2007. Indiening van nog niet behandelde waarnemingen van voor die datum wordt zeer op prijs gesteld. Er zijn geen wijzigingen in de lijst met taxa waarvoor de zogeheten 'omgekeerde bewijslast' geldt (aanvaarding alleen mogelijk als onweerlegbaar is gedocumenteerd dat de vogel in kwestie ongeringd en ongemarkeerd was).

De twee aanvaarde gevallen van Amerikaanse Oeverloper *Actitis macularius* op de Nederlandse lijst zullen gaan herrouleren omdat er de afgelopen jaren enkele publicaties zijn verschenen over afwijkende Oeverlopers *A hypoleucos* die kenmerken vertoonden van Amerikaanse Oeverloper (en andersom).

Pim Wolf heeft met ingang van 1 januari 2007 afscheid genomen als commissielid; hij is inmiddels opgevolgd door Arjan Ova uit Margraten, Limburg, die voor een periode van vier jaar is aangetreden als nieuw commissielid. LAURENS B STEIJN & ROLAND E VAN DER VLIET