



97 Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, adult, upperwing, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, June 1992 (Pierre Yésou). Less common wing-tip pattern. Note incomplete subterminal black bar on p10

98 Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, (sub)adult, upperwing, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, June 1992 (Pierre Yésou). Wing-tip pattern shown by a minority of birds. White mirror on p9 is missing. Note black markings on outer greater coverts in this otherwise fully adult-plumaged breeding bird





**99** Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, (sub)adult, upperwing, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, early June 1992 (*Pierre Yésou*). This bird shows very dark wing-tip pattern, without white mirror on p9, and with many dark markings on outer coverts. Although bird was trapped with nest, its advanced moult stage (growing inner primaries and in particular fresh unmarked outer median coverts contrasting with older, brown-tinged, surrounding feathers) suggests that it has not yet reached fully adult plumage **100** Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*, adult, underwing, Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, May 1992 (*Pierre Yésou*). Note contrast between mid-grey remiges, paler grey greater and median coverts, and white lesser coverts. Shadow is partly masking pale grey tips to primaries that appear white and translucent when seen from below in flight



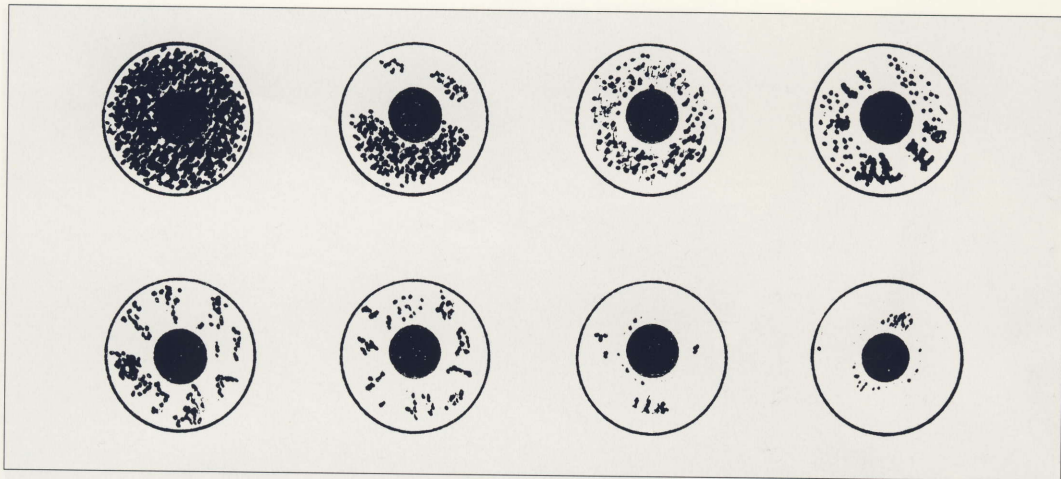


FIGURE 2 Variability of iris pigmentation in Mongolian Gull / Mongoolse Meeuw *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus* at Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia (redrawn from field sketches of birds in hand) (Pierre Yésou)

ped at nests and examined in the hand, 17% showed dark markings on the upper mandible only and 15% on both mandibles (in one extreme case, the markings formed an almost complete dark bill band of c 3 mm width).

#### Eye colour

The orbital ring was vermilion-red in all adult-plumaged birds I examined in the hand.

Pyzhianov & Tupitchyn (1992) described the iris as ranging from pale ashy-grey to olive-grey to dark smoky-grey. 54 and 68% of their samples of Lake Baikal and Lake Khubsugul, respectively, were pale eyed. They found no correlation between iris and leg colours (a point I did not check).

In the birds I examined in the hand, the iris was dull yellow (very pale, almost whitish, in some), usually peppered with grey (pale bluish-grey to dark grey-brown) minute spots in variable density over a much variable extent of the iris surface. In some birds, the grey was peppered quite uniformly over the iris, often with a few small aggregations forming dark marks on the overall pale eye. In other cases, dense grey spots formed one or more large dark areas over the eye while sparse spotting left the yellow iris colour showing over the rest of it (figure 2). Eye darkness is not sex related. Pale eyes and dark eyes are found in both males and females and pairing occurs irrespective of the iris colour (of eight pairs, the male had darker eyes than the female in four cases and the female had darker eyes than the male in three cases; the partners of the remaining pair showed similarly coloured eyes).

Such a high variability of iris pigmentation makes it difficult to accurately comment on the eye colour of *mongolicus*. In a first analysis of 43 birds in the hand, I classified 28% of them as pale eyed, 42% as intermediate and 30% as dark eyed. A more detailed analysis, including two more samples (table 3), showed that nearly one-third was pale eyed while grey spots covered more than half of the iris surface in another third. Really dark-eyed birds, however, accounted for less than 10%.

In the field, colour assessment is less easy. Of 236 adult birds studied through binoculars or telescope, 89% were classified as yellow or yellowish eyed. It thus seems that eyes classified as pale grey in the hand are perceived as yellowish in the field while dark-eyed birds accounted for only 4% in the field sample (not statistically different from the 8% found during the in-hand examination).

#### Leg colour

Pyzhianov & Tupitchyn (1992) described the high degree of variability of the leg colour at Lake Baikal and in Mongolia. They examined various series of birds in the hand, comparing the leg colour with colour charts. Grey legs accounted for 22-40%, yellow 13-27%, pink 21-46% and flesh 4-10%, while 6-30% of the birds showed mix-coloured legs. The proportion of each colour type varied between colonies and from one year to the other in a given colony. Also, in a proportion of birds, the leg colour showed temporal changes. According to Pyzhjanov (1998), not