

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Through the 20th century, the Lesser Black-backed Gull enjoyed a great expansion of its European breeding range, from the 1930s bringing an increasing number of vagrants to North America. By 1978 the first of these crossed the continent to reach California, and in 1996 the species reached another milestone, the southwesternmost county in the continental United States.

Winter: San Diego County's first and so far only Lesser Black-backed Gull was an adult photographed on the beach at the mouth of the San Luis Rey River, Oceanside (H5), 22 February–2 March 1996 (P. A. Ginsburg, NASFN 50:222, 1996; McCaskie and San Miguel 1999). With the species' continuing range expansion (Post and Lewis 1995), more occurrences are to be expected.

Taxonomy: Lesser Black-backed Gulls reaching California, like almost all others in North America, are *L. f. graellsii* Brehm, 1857, whose breeding range centers on the British



Photo by Jack W. Schlotte

Isles but has spread northwest to Iceland and Greenland. It is distinguished by its back being paler than that of other subspecies of the Lesser Black-backed, a shade close to that of subspecies *wymani* of the Western Gull.