

## **NEW LONGEVITY RECORD OF A GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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Determining the maximum age attained by a wild bird requires an individual to be marked as a nestling, usually with a leg band, and subsequently recovered at the time of its death. When banded, it must be released to live a normal, wild, life in which it will encounter predators, adverse weather, starvation, and accidents (Welty 1975). Of the tens of millions of birds that have been banded in North America it is an extremely rare event to have a band return for a species over 30 years old.

On 21 July 1969, a Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) chick (Figure 1) was banded (#0807-31818) on Mitlenatch Island, British Columbia, under a master banding permit issued to the author. Mitlenatch Island is located near the northern end of the Strait of Georgia (49° 57' 00" N, 125° 00' 00" W) about 13 km east of Miracle Beach on Vancouver Island. It is a major seabird colony

supporting breeding Glaucous-winged Gulls, Pelagic Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*), Double-crested Cormorants (*P. auritus*), Pigeon Guillemots (*Cepphus columba*), and Black Oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) (Campbell et al. 1990a, 1990b).



**Figure 1.** Glaucous-winged Gull chick, 10-12 days old, with band on right leg. Mitlenatch Island, BC. 22 July 1966 (R. Wayne Campbell).

On 20 September 2006, D. Dean found the banded gull dead among beach rocks about 100 m north of the northern boundary of Kitty Coleman Park. This 10 ha marine park is located about six kilometres northwest of Courtenay on Vancouver Island, BC and only 46 km from the gull's natal colony. The chick was about 14 days old when banded so the calculated maximum age, including leap year days, is 37 years, 2 months, 11 days old.

Verbeek (1993) suggests that the Glaucous-winged Gull rarely lives beyond 15 years and at maturity Vermeer (1963) gives the species an average life expectancy of 9.5 years. Previous longevity records for the Glaucous-winged Gull in North America are 20 years 62 days (Campbell 1968), 21 years (Vermeer 1963), 24 years 9 months (Klimkiewicz 2007), 25 years 6 months (Campbell 1975), 29+ years (Wakefield 1987), and 32 years (Brown 1985).

According to longevity records of North American birds reported by Clapp et al. (1982, 1983), Klimkiewicz and Futcher (1987, 1989), and Klimkiewicz et al. (1983), the Glaucous-winged

Gull from British Columbia is now the fourth longest surviving species. The top three are Laysan Albatross (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) at 50 years and eight months, Black-footed Albatross (*P. nigripes*) at 40 years and eight months, and Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) at 38 years and 2 months old.

The other species in the top ten that have been recorded in British Columbia were Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) at 34 years old and Red-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) at 32 years and eight months old.

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