

Laughing Gull: *Larus atricilla*



Summer breeding plumage

Laughing Gulls use mostly grasses to build large nests constructed on the ground. Omnivores like most gulls, this species often scavenges for food and preys on small fish and other small animals. These birds are very agile on the wing and are known for following boats and catching food tossed into the air. The larger Herring Gulls prey on the Laughing Gulls' eggs and, together with the loss of coastal marshes, the Laughing Gulls' numbers may be in decline.

Laughing Gulls are medium-sized gulls (14-16 in. long with a 39-43 in. wingspan) common along the Atlantic and Gulf coast. This species has a black "hood" in the summer, but loses it in winter. The Laughing Gull is found from Maine to the Caribbean and northern South America, in marshes, bays and estuaries with the northernmost populations migrating further south in winter. It gets its name from its loud, high-pitched, "ha-ha-ha-ha-haah-haah-haah" laughing call.



Winter plumage