

Belant, J. L.; Dolbeer, R. A. 1995. ABSTRACT. Age classification of laughing gulls based on summer plumage. In: 113th stated meeting of American Ornithologists Union; 15-19 August 1995; Cincinnati, OH: 157.

Age classification of Laughing Gulls based on summer plumage. Jerrold L. Belant* and Richard A. Dolbeer, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Denver Wildlife Research Center, Sandusky, OH 44870. We described quantitatively 18 summer plumage characteristics of 249 known-age Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) collected in New York during 1992-1994. Plumage characteristics appeared similar between sexes. Fifty-two percent of 2-year old Laughing Gulls possessed partial or complete tail bands in contrast to 3.5% of 3-year old and 0% of ≥ 4 -year old gulls. Pink coloration on the breast or abdomen occurred in 12% of individuals. Prevalence of black-tipped primaries and length of black coloration present decreased with age, although not significantly for birds ≥ 4 years old. Using the presence of a distinct black-and-gray-colored interface on the distal portion of the 5th primary, we correctly classified 95.7% of 245 2- and ≥ 3 -year old Laughing Gulls. Using this characteristic with the 5th and 6th primary, and measuring the length of black coloration present on the trailing vane of the 6th primary, we correctly aged 98.0% of 244 gulls. This technique and previously published plumage characteristics provide rapid and accurate classification of Laughing Gulls in summer plumage as < 1 -, 1-, 2-, or ≥ 3 -years old.