

Subsequently, four additional records were added to the Tanzanian Atlas data base up to 2011, all of single birds: Arusha NP, April 1981 (John Beesley); Kunduchi Salt Pans, Dar-es-Salaam, January–February 1984 (Neil and Liz Baker); Saadani Salt Pans, January 2005 (Jan Olsen); and Bagamoyo Salt Pans, January 2005 (Thomas Jacobsen.) Then, early in 2012, unprecedented numbers were recorded at two coastal sites.

On 30 January Mark and Alison Muller counted 25 birds on salt pans north of the Wami River on the edge of Saadani NP. Then on 5 February at least 28 birds were found on the salt pans north of Bagamoyo, the site that held the single bird in January 2005. The first six birds were found feeding, not by moving in tight circles but simply swimming and rapidly inserting their bills just below the surface of the flooded pans. Minutes later successive groups of three, two and four birds were noted resting along the banks of adjacent pans. Within 30 minutes a larger flock of 13 birds was found, two feeding in a similar manner to the first group, the others resting on exposed substrate. A small flock of Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatalis* and a single Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* were observed feeding in the same manner as the phalaropes among a larger flock of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*. The stilts were also catching prey just below the surface but were tall enough to wade in the shallow water. All 28 phalaropes were still present on 11 March.

These phalaropes were presumably from the wintering population known to occur well offshore in the northwest Indian Ocean (Cramp 1983). Their unprecedented numbers suggest either weather or food related movements of this population away from their traditional wintering grounds.

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The first four records of Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* for Tanzania

Four recent Tanzanian records of Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* have all been accepted by the East African Rarities Committee.

On 28 February 2010 at Speke Bay Lodge on the southeastern shore of Lake Victoria NEB located a flock of seven birds. They were on the water some 100 m offshore with a small flock of Grey-headed Gulls *L. cirrocephalus* and a lone Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. Also present were a number of Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Whiskered *Chlidonias hybridus* and White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus*. The light conditions were far from perfect but the long necks of the Slender-billed Gulls, their whiteness

and their distinctive head shape stood out. As the viewing improved three birds were seen to have red bills, the small “beady” eye was noted (but looked dark from a distance when not viewed side on) and pale red legs were glimpsed. Liz Baker, Matt Aeberhard, Maneno Mbilinyi and Leons Mlawila all subsequently saw the birds well and agreed with the identification.

On 20 September 2010 near Maramboi Tented Camp on the eastern shore of Lake Manyara Steve Windels observed three gulls that he described to JCC as Slender-billed and which he photographed. On 25 September JCC was with SW when the three gulls were seen and photographed again. All appeared to be adults in winter plumage. The most obvious features were the apparently “long” head with shallow sloped forehead and very faint ear spot, and the long, slender bill, pale orange with no dark markings. The mantle and innerwing were pale grey, the underparts clean white with a slight pink cast. In the photos the eyes appeared pale, the legs similar in colour to the bill. Size and wing pattern were considered similar to those of Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*.

On 30 September 2010 MA located and photographed two adult Slender-billed Gulls in the southeast lagoon at Lake Natron, at the mouth of the main spring that runs from below Makat House. Both showed a distinctive pink flush below and pure white heads. The grey backs were pale compared to those of Grey-headed Gulls present. The bills of both birds were dark and long—if not particularly “slender”, the foreheads long and sloping. Distinctively attenuated necks were noted in flight. In size they were similar to Grey-headed Gulls (Black-headed Gull would appear smaller than this species). These birds remained at the site until at least 10 October.

On 20 February 2012 AK found and photographed another adult Slender-billed Gull on the north-eastern shoreline of Lake Eyasi, some 50 km due west of Lake Manyara.

There is an earlier published Tanzanian record from Lake Manyara on the 28 March 1971 (Watson 1971), but following Oreel (1975) this was not accepted by Britton (1980), essentially because the report mentioned dark eyes and did not explicitly exclude Black-headed Gull. The above therefore constitute the first substantiated records for the country. Involving at least 14 individuals from four different localities they suggest a southerly extension of the wintering range of this gull.

References

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