

## A first record of the Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* in East Africa

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*, breeding in the High Arctic, is primarily a pelagic species that is only a rare wanderer to the Indian Ocean (Day *et al.* 2020). There is a single May record of a vagrant to the central Somali coast (Urban *et al.* 1986, Redman *et al.* 2009) and records of wintering birds off the South African coast extend northeast to southern Mozambique (Lambert 2018). It has hitherto been unrecorded from Kenya and Tanzania.

On 8 January 2024 BK and BH observed a small and unfamiliar gull on the beach 18 km due south of Malindi, Kenya (3°13'21"S, 40°7'27"E). It was associating with roosting Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* and appeared to have an injury to its left foot, which was folded backwards. BK and BH photographed the gull and sent the images to JB the following week, at which point it was recognized as an immature Sabine's Gull (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Immature Sabines's Gull *Xema sabini* south of Malindi on 8 January 2024 (B. Kanaka).

Field characters that identify the bird as this species include the pale grey-brown secondary coverts (which were heavily worn) contrasting with a pale grey mantle, and narrow blackish collar around the rear of the neck. The bill is all black with a very faint patch of dull yellow forming near the tip of the upper mandible, while the legs and feet are pale pinkish-grey. The tail appears forked and is all white but with black tips.

It seems possible that this individual may have come ashore on account of the injury to its left foot. The January date is appropriate for a wintering bird, although given the fairly well-studied avifauna of coastal East Africa, this record must be considered an example of extreme vagrancy.

### References

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