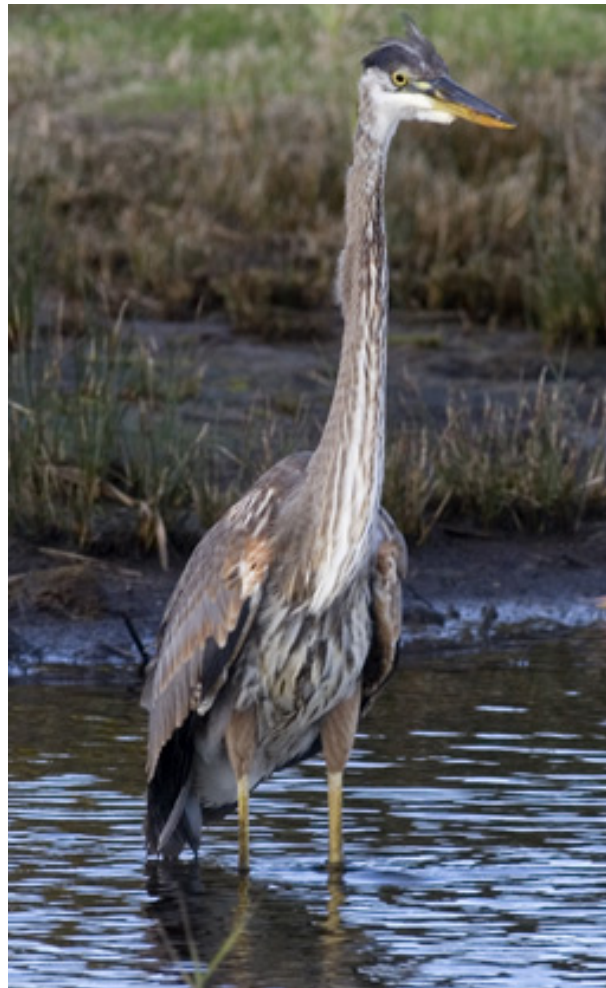


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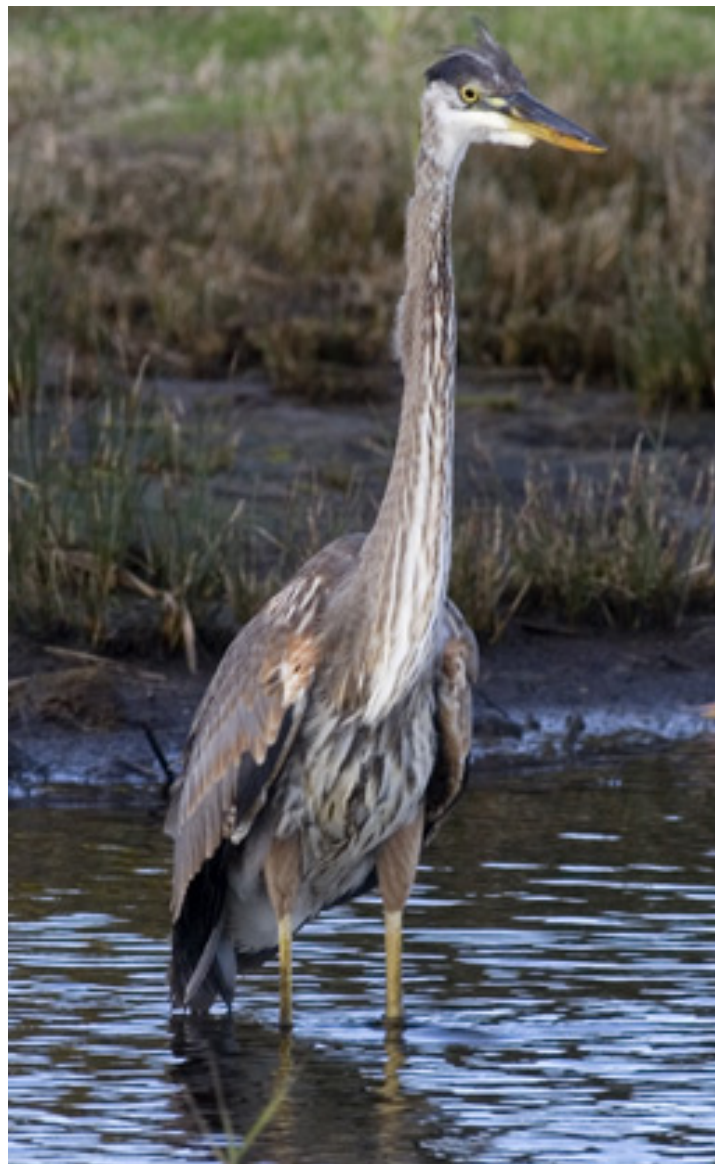
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UK400 CLUB
BRITISH BIRDING ASSOCIATION

This is the **UK400 Club Rare Bird Alert** for [Friday 7th December 2007](#), issued at 2200 hours, and published in association with Rare Bird Alert Pagers, and utilising valuable information gleaned from the Regional Birdlines, Birdguides, websites, local email groups and individual observers. *All Irish rare bird news is by kind courtesy of John Coveney and BINS.*

Following on from a Tri-colored Heron *Egretta tricolor* very recently on Gran Canaria (Canary Islands), the UK has finally yielded its first-ever naturally-arriving GREAT BLUE HERON *Ardea herodias*. Discovered by Ashley Fisher mid afternoon, the bird - a juvenile - showed well throughout the rest of the available daylight on Lower Moors pools, St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) until dusk, delighting the 15 or so resident birdwatchers.

The bird had presumably arrived with the weather - a deep Atlantic depression straight in from North America. Although 19 have been recorded on the Azores previously, including eight individuals in autumn 2006, this species still remains a mega vagrant elsewhere in the Western Palearctic. It represents the **435th** species recorded in Britain and Ireland in 2007. The photograph below was taken earlier this afternoon by Martin Goodey.



Also of a heron flavour, the CATTLE EGRET invasion continues apace, with as many as 10 birds wandering Cornwall and South Devon. At least three remain between Drift and Sancreed at Treganhoe Farm (SW 428 291) (Cornwall), with at least one at Siblyback Reservoir (Cornwall), whilst a further bird frequents fields opposite School Road (SX 848 733), north of Twelve Oaks Farm south of Teigngrace (South Devon).

The red-ringed GREAT WHITE EGRET of Loire de l'Atlantique origin remains on winter territory at Mockbeggar Lake, Blashford (Hants), whilst rare waders include long-staying LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER at Bowling Green Marsh, Topsham (South Devon) and SPOTTED SANDPIPER at Lisvane Reservoir, Cardiff (East Glamorgan).

For larid enthusiasts, the Dix Pit gull is a must-see: this beautiful, velvet-breasted bird of Canadian/Arctic origin is a dead-ringer for a juvenile Thayer's Gull at first glance but on closer inspection a bird clearly at the extreme dark variation of Kumlien's Gull. The scapular pattern, tertial pattern, secondary bar (or lack of) and tail subtleties are all outside the variation of Thayer's but within the variation of Kumlien's. In addition to this intriguing bird, there are also 4 Caspian Gulls in the vicinity (adult, 2 2nd-winters & a first-winter) and a juvenile Iceland Gull. Please park in Stanton Harcourt and walk SW to view the northern end of Dix Pit at SP 406 052. Do not obstruct access to the landfill site.



Juvenile white-winged gull, most likely at the darkest variation of Kumlien's Gull, Dix Pit, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, 6th December 2007 (Ian Lewington)

This heavily marked bird may be an intergrade with Thayer's Gull, given its even-toned underparts, dark tail and primaries but the scapular and tertial pattern suggest

Kumlien's Gull

Pages 4-5 same bird, photographed by the finder Nic Hallam





Although I have not had the chance to get down and see this bird in the flesh yet, Ian Lewington's and Nic Hallam's excellent flight and perched images allow one to get an accurate view of its appearance. In my view, the bird is a very dark KUMLIEN'S GULL, perhaps with some thayeri influence. The pattern on the tertials and scapulars is INCORRECT, in my opinion, for Thayer's Gull. For example, there is a wash across the tertials and an area of indistinct marbling, whereas thayeri would be expected to be discernibly dark centred in this area. Furthermore, the scapular patterning is not how I would read that of the average juvenile thayeri. They look noticeably barred. Californian (and some Irish) juvenile Thayer's Gulls that I have seen show a clear contrast between the much darker tertials and paler scapulars and this is not apparent in the Oxfordshire larid. Furthermore, the extent of dark in the outer primaries falls short of that of typical thayeri, and the secondary bar is nothing like as obvious as you would expect.

Furthermore, as Julian Hough accurately states on International ID Frontiers, the uppertail pattern is not quite right; the expanse of pale feathering at the base is too broad a band and the plain pattern to the outer tail feathers is odd. The primary coverts and outer primaries are very dark, as well as the dark head and grey-washed underparts, but surely this falls well within the normal variation of a dark juvenile Kumlieni.

I would be most interested to hear what Bruce Mactavish has to say on its identity, as he knows only too well the immense variability exhibited by individual Kumlieni's and Thayer's Gulls and is a REAL expert in this field.

There has never been an acceptable Thayer's Gull in Britain, but at least seven in Ireland (mainly juveniles but some adults). Some birds, such as a recent claim from County Mayo, clearly have North American Herring Gull influence, so the nightmare hybrid scenario is never far away.

Elsewhere, rare gulls include two wintering adult winter BONAPARTE'S GULLS in NE Scotland: at Peterhead (Aberdeenshire) and at Ferryden, south of Montrose (Angus). The latter frequents the channel off the turning circle on the River South Esk or the beach on the north side whilst the former favours the play area between the Texaco depot and the Ugie Estuary mouth. In the same region, two KING EIDERS (a first-winter drake and a female) remain off Girdle Ness (Aberdeenshire).



First-winter drake and female King Eiders; drake Common Eider, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, November 2007 (Hugh Addelee)

The colour-ringed juvenile WHITE-TAILED SEA EAGLE, one of 18 birds ringed in Finnish Lapland nests this summer, continues its winter sojourn in deepest rural Hampshire, once again visiting Quarley Down east of Cholderton Farm Estate. Although much more wide-ranging than when it first appeared, it still regularly visits the ridge east of Shipton Bellinger.

The two first-winter male DESERT WHEATEARS present since 24th November are set forth to enter a third week of residency, surviving in fields at Long Nab, Burniston (North Yorks) and at Horsey Dunes (Norfolk) (see previous Alerts for full viewing and access details), whilst up to 20 Lapland Buntings remain at Salthouse Beach (Norfolk) and another 15 at Flamborough Head (East Yorks).



Desert Wheatear, Burniston, North Yorkshire, November 2007 (John Harwood)

A very late PECTORAL SANDPIPER was again at Caerlaverock WWT (Dumfries & Galloway) today (viewed from Tower Hide), with the first-winter GREY PHALAROPE still showing very well by the dam at Abberton Reservoir (Essex).



A long-stayer - this first-winter Grey Phalarope has now been present at Abberton Reservoir for over three weeks, favouring the concrete banks close to the dam. These superb photographs were taken by Adrian Kettle and Sean Nixon

BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS are still largely confined to Northern Scotland, with rare wildfowl represented by first-winter drake LESSER SCAUP at Draycote Water (Warks) (note new viewing restrictions: park in the country park car park by the entrance - £1.50 charge - then walk north along the concrete bank for 0.8 miles to view Toft Bay) and drake RING-NECKED DUCKS at Foxcote Reservoir, Buckingham (North Bucks) and Portbury Wharf (Avon).

A HUMPBACK WHALE is present for a third day off Mumbles Head (Glamorgan).

In IRELAND, recent highlights include an adult Sabine's Gull at Cobh (Co. Cork) and 2 CATTLE EGRETS at Red Barn Strand, Youghal (Co. Cork), whilst 2 RICHARDSON'S CANADA GEESE remain with Barnacle Geese between Ballintemple and Ardtermon (Co. Sligo), the drake AMERICAN BLACK DUCK is at Ventry Harbour (Co. Kerry), drake BARROW'S GOLDENEYE at Quile Pondage NR (Co. Down) and adult FORSTER'S TERN at Cruisetown Beach (Co. Louth). A drake Eider off Raghley Point (Co. Sligo) shows characteristics of one of the Arctic Canadian forms and the KENTISH PLOVER recently present at Red Barn Strand, Youghal, was traced as having been ringed in Germany.



Irish gulls: top left & right: adult Glaucous Gull and Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, County Galway, December 2007 (Michael Davis); bottom: juvenile Glaucous Gull, Killybegs Harbour, County Donegal, December 2007 (Derek Charles)



Juvenile Glaucous Gull, Killybegs Harbour, County Donegal, December 2007
(Derek Charles)



Cattle Egrets, Red Barn Strand, Youghal, Cork, 3rd December 2007 (Paul Moore)



This first-winter Kentish Plover was superbly photographed by Victor Caschera, as it fed on the beach at Red Barn Strand, Youghal, in County Cork, in early December 2007. The bird was ringed on its left leg and eventually traced to Germany.

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Front Cover ©

Great Blue Heron, Lower Moors, St Mary's, Scilly, 7th December 2007 (Martin Goodey)

Back Cover ©

Desert Wheatear, Long Nab, Burniston, North Yorkshire, 1st December 2007
(Graham Catley)

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