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Feeding Association Between Bonaparte's Gulls and Red-breasted Mergansers

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Feeding association between Bonaparte's Gulls and Red-breasted Mergansers.—On 3 February 1979 at Blackburn Bay, Sarasota County, Florida, we watched an interspecific feeding association between 30 Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) and approximately 40 Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*). Two mergansers were adult males and the others were females or birds in non-adult plumage. The mergansers swam in a concentrated flock and seemed to dive simultaneously. The gulls hovered over the flock dipping into the water continuously, almost before the mergansers emerged from their dive, and then alighted on the water and swam along with the mergansers. On 6 February 1979 we saw the same feeding behavior (with only about half as many participants) at close range from our doorstep, using 7×35 binoculars and 20× telescope. We watched the gulls feed directly on small items (probably fish) stirred up by the submerged mergansers. No instance of "robbing" was observed.

On 10 February 1979 we watched a one-to-one interspecific feeding between a Bonaparte's and a merganser. It was an unhurried action; the merganser submerged and the gull would follow, swimming slowly on the water, usually rising up out of the water and flying to where the merganser was emerging. The gull was not always successful in obtaining food but when it was the food appeared to be snapped up from the surface of the bay.

On several occasions we watched large flocks of Bonaparte's feeding on a freshwater pond a few miles away but there was no obvious interspecific feeding with the Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) that were also on the pond.

Hérons (*Casmerodius albus*, *Egretta thula*, *Hydranassa tricolor*) have been noted in feeding associations with wintering flocks of Red-breasted Mergansers (Emlen and Ambrose 1970, Auk 87: 164-165; Parks and Bressler 1963, Auk 80: 198-199) but we can find no records of gulls associating with Red-breasted Merganser flocks.—STANLEY STEDMAN AND ANNETTE STEDMAN, 1156 Casey Key Road, Nokomis, Florida 33555.

Another offshore sighting of Sabine's Gull for Florida.—On 23 September 1978 at 1005, Allan King and Gary King and I sighted an adult Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) in basic plumage approximately 5 km E of Palm Beach Inlet, Palm Beach County, Florida. The bird was observed under good light conditions for five minutes during which it flew directly over the boat at an estimated 10-15 m for a minute or so. The sea at the time was 1.5-2 m and the wind E 10-15 km. The outstanding feature of this small gull was the conspicuous white secondaries that were readily seen from a distance. The outer primaries were black; the top of the head, back and upper wing coverts were dark gray; and the forked tail, forehead and underparts were white. The bill was small and dark. We did not note yellow on the tip of the bill.

This is the fourth and southernmost record (third sight record) for the species in Florida. All reports have been along the Atlantic Coast of the peninsula. Ruth T. Rogers found an oiled specimen at Daytona Beach, Volusia County, on 1 November 1952, that was sent to the U.S. National Museum (Sprunt 1954, Florida bird life, New York, Coward McCann, Inc.). On 24 September 1963, A. E. Ellis and J. B. Johnson saw two off Playlinda Beach, Brevard County (Cunningham 1964, Aud. Field Notes 18:25). Then on 4 November 1975, Robert D. Barber and James B. Johnson saw an immature 29 km (18 mi.) E of Cocoa Beach, Brevard Co. (Barber and Johnson 1976, Fla. Field Nat. 4: 14). These few reports have an interesting grouping during the fall migration; two were in late September within one day of each other, and the remaining two were in early November three days apart. The two reports from Brevard County were associated with NE winds, but the Palm Beach County occurrence did not appear to be associated with any significant weather pattern.—H. P. LANGRIDGE, 1421 W. Ocean Ave., Lantana, Florida 33462.