private boat, hitting a glass panel in an attempt to escape. It was in exhausted state, which led the observer to put it aside, considering that it was dying **[243–245]**. To his surprise, the bird later gain rigor and flew away (Mohammad Rizwan Sap, pers. comm. 14 April 2024). The bird might have arrived via other vessels and ships at the seaport and ended up in the standing boat. Karachi Port handles most of Pakistan's inbound and outbound cargo and operates 24x7, accommodating vessels up to 75,000 DWT (Shahzad 2022), including international trade, which could be the origin of this bird landing on a vessel as a stopover in the open Arabian Sea.

Comparison with field guide illustrations identified the bird as a White-throated Robin and the same was confirmed by regional experts (Zafeer Ahmed Shaikh and Akram Awan, pers. comm. April 2024). There is no morphologically confusing species in the reported area. Presumably an adult autumn/fresh male with blue-grey crown, upperparts and wings, thin and long white supercilium reaching behind eye, black on face and throat-sides enclosing narrow white chin and throat, rich orange breast, flanks and belly transitioning to white towards vent (Clement & Rose 2015). White-throated Robin is distributed in Asia Minor, southern Caucasus and Levant east to Iran, and from southern Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to west-central and north-eastern Afghanistan as a summer breeding migrant, while it winters in north-eastern and eastern Africa (Collar 2020). There are two unconfirmed anecdotal records from Baluchistan in the form of a pair collected from Chaman on 02 July 1880 by Barnes and another collected by Watson at Quetta in June; both were reported by Murray but were later rejected and deemed unverified indirect observations in proceeding ornithological studies of Baluchistan (Ticehurst 1926:709; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). This species is also absent from all the standard ornithological literature on Pakistan (Ali & Ripley 1987; Roberts 1992; Grimmett et al. 2008). However, it was expected as a potential vagrant to northern areas of Pakistan (Kazimeirczak, 2000). The closest and recent observation to Pakistan is *c.*40 km from the international border at linear distance, reported from Zahedan-Jahad Keshavarzi Garden, Iran, on eBird (Atashpanjeh 2024; Keykha 2025). It is a long-distance migrant with south, south-east, and south-west directional affinities and a potential for vagrancy outside its normal range further west, as it has been reported from the British Isles, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, mainland Greece (two records), Cyprus (12 records up to 2006), Egypt (May 1984), and South Africa (Northern Cape, July 2006) (Clement & Rose 2015). The current extralimital record in the east is potentially a spring passage migrant returning from its wintering range in Africa to the breeding grounds in Asia, which is usually done in April, with first-year males usually arriving up to one week ahead of females to secure breeding territory (Clement & Rose 2015). This record is an important addition to the national avifaunal inventory of Pakistan as well as the Indian Subcontinent bird checklist.

My sincere thanks to Mohammad Rizwan Sap for reporting this observation and providing images of this important record.

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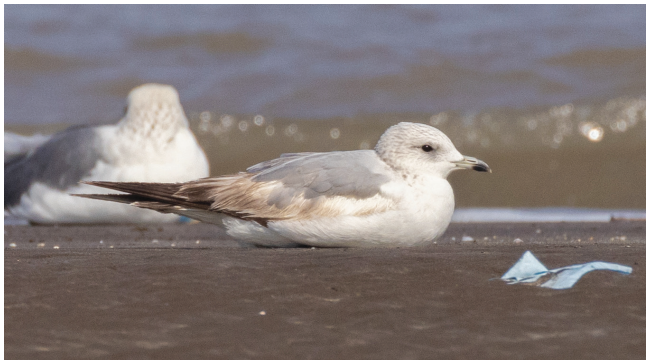
The Common Gull *Larus canus* at Mamachiwadi, Virar, near Mumbai: An addition to the avifauna of Maharashtra

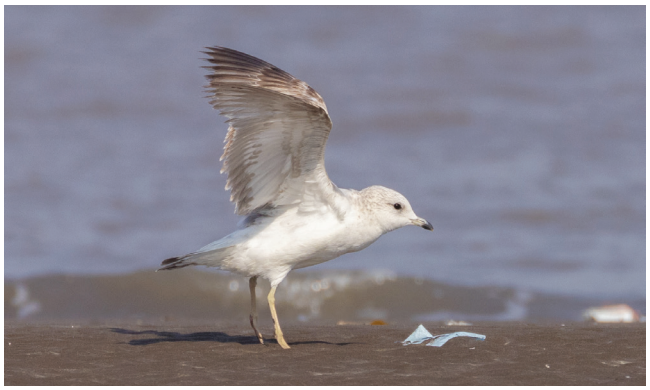
On the morning of 14 December 2024, while birding and scanning a gull flock for a potential Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* at Mamachiwadi, Virar (19.284°N, 72.452°E), near Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, we noticed a smaller sized gull amongst the larger Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*. Immediately, the different structure was noticeable and we wondered what species we were looking at. The bird mostly rested on the shore, only sometimes standing up when the flock got disturbed. Several pictures were taken to get the underwing and tail pattern along with side-by-side comparison with Lesser Black-backed Gull (Pereira 2024a). The individual took off southwards with two Lesser Black-backed Gulls while the rest of the flock remained.

Upon reviewing images in the field and using Merlin Bird ID App, we realized that the bird seemed like a first calendar-year Common Gull *L. canus*. Since no records were found for Maharashtra in eBird and from a literature search, and given the complexities of gull identification, we approached Prasad Ganpule and Ashwin Viswanathan for confirmation. They agreed with certainty that it was a Common Gull based on the graceful structure, small and compact size, white rounded head, short and slim bill together with longer and lean wings **[246, 247]**.

Subsequent searches were made at nearby locations with no sightings in December and January 2025. However, on 17 February 2025, two individuals were reported at the same site (**[248–251]**, Shenai 2025). These two individuals were observed and photographed by several birders throughout the month of February. The two Common Gulls were actively foraging amongst Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*, feral Rock Pigeons *Columba livia*, House Crows *Corvus splendens*, Western Reef-Heron *Egretta gularis,* and stray dogs feeding on organic waste at the shore near Arnala Jetty (19.274°N, 72.444°E), *c.*3 km from first site (Pereira 2025).

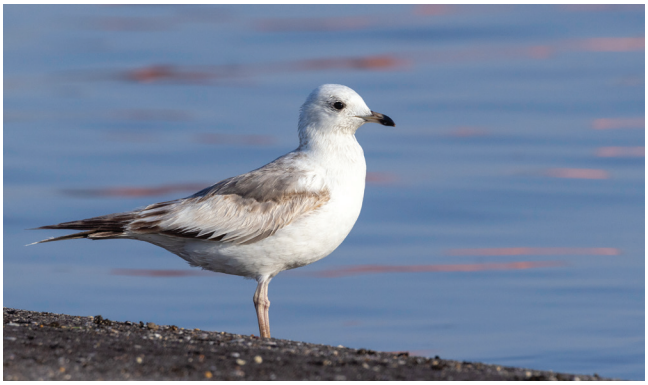


246. Common Gull showing white rounded head, short and slim beak, and a graceful compact structure photographed on 14 December 2024.

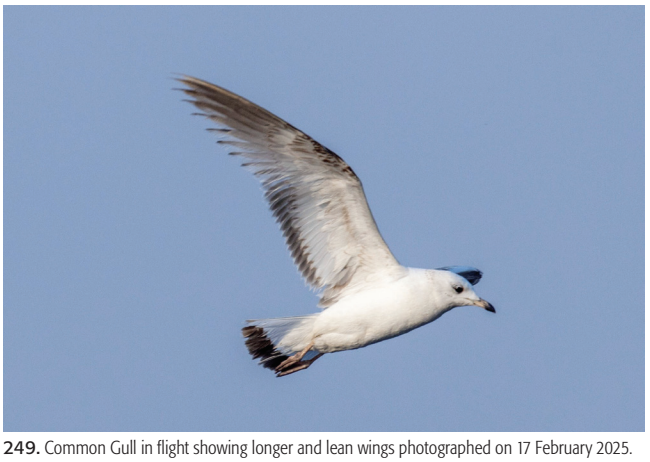


Both photos: Rahul Pereira

247. Common Gull showing longer and lean wings photographed on 14 December 2024.

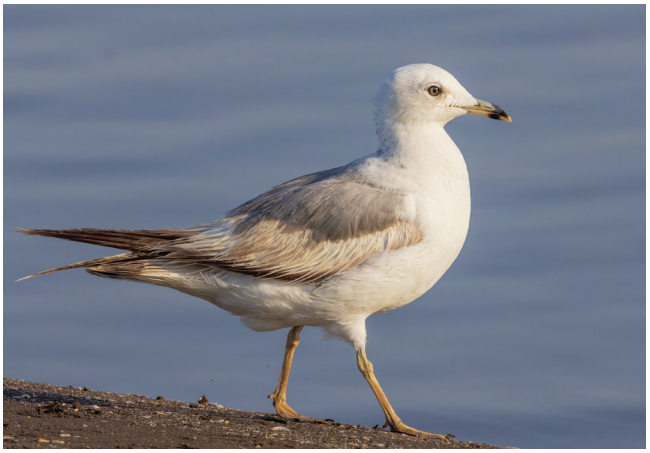


248. Common Gull with short bill, cute and rounded head, short and a graceful compact structure photographed on 17 February 2025.



Both photos: Ramesh Shenai

249. Common Gull in flight showing longer and lean wings photographed on 17 February 2025.



Rahul Pereira

250. The second Common Gull also showing rounded head, and a graceful compact structure photographed on 17 February 2025.

Ramesh Shenai

251. The second Common Gull in flight photographed on 17 February 2025.

To assess whether either of the individuals were the same as the bird reported in December 2024, we closely inspected the plumages of these birds in comparison with the December individual **[252–254]**. However, since the birds were undergoing moult, it is not quite easy to judge whether the differences were just a result of different stages of moult. The second individual definitely had a longer bill with a more extensive pale bill tip and a pale iridis and flatter head and is not the same as the December individual. However, the December individual was

Rahul Pereira

252. Head structure of Common Gull photographed on 14 December 2024.

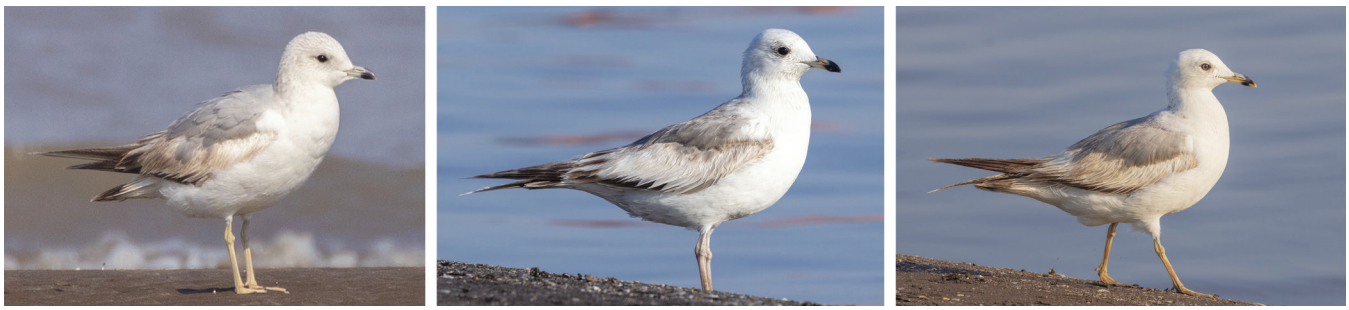
superficially similar to the first individual on bill pattern and plumage, but with minor differences. The December bird had a much shorter bill and the gape flange does not extend further inwards from the base of the bill compared to the first bird from February. There is variability in the extent of black on the bill as well, however, that could have changed colour during the intervening period. However, there is a high likelihood that the December individual was different from both the February

Photo: Ramesh Shenai

253. Head structure of the first individual of Common Gull photographed on 17 February 2025. Note similarity of bill structure but difference in the extent of gape flange.

Photo: Rahul Pereira

254. Head structure of the second individual of Common Gull photographed on 17 February 2025. Note the longer bill.



Photos: Rahul Pereira (left), Ramesh Shenai (centre), Rahul Pereira (right)

255. Side profiles of December and the two February individuals respectively showing sparse head striations giving it an almost clean white look. Brown spots on lower hindneck making a half collar or at least a hint of it. Underparts are white with no markings visible. Subspecies *canus* and *kamtschatschensis* would have darker plumage overall and a well-marked head, indicating all three to be *heinei*.

Photos: Rahul Pereira (left), Ramesh Shenai (centre), Rahul Pereira (right)

256. Tails of the three individuals (in the same order as **255**) showing unmarked uppertail coverts. Subspecies *canus* and *kamtschatschensis* would show markings on uppertail coverts.

Photos: Rahul Pereira (left), Ramesh Shenai (centre), Ramesh Shenai (right)

257. Underwing pattern, underparts, vent and undertail coverts of the three individuals (in the same order as **255**). The underwing shows a mostly white wing panel with a dark trailing edge. Underwing covert and auxillary feathers have light brown tips/edges to them. All of the underparts including vent and undertail coverts are white and without any markings. The underwings and underparts of subspecies *canus* and *kamtschatschensis* would be more boldly patterned.

Table 1. Identification of first cycle Common Gull subspecies. There are some overlap and variation of features amongst the subspecies. The table below shows identification pointers in typical birds

Sl. No.	Feature	*canus*	*heinei*	*kamtschatschensis*
1	Head and body	Extensive streaking on head, breast and underparts. Overall plumage is darker than *heinei* but lighter than *kamtschatschensis*.	Sparse head striations giving it an almost clean white look. Brown spots on lower hindneck making a half collar. Usually, unmarked white underparts. Palest plumage amongst the three.	Heavily marked head, strong streaking from breast to undertail coverts. Darkest plumage amongst the three.
2	Uppertail coverts	Marked uppertail coverts.	Unmarked uppertail coverts, rarely has some spots.	Marked uppertail coverts.
3	Underparts, vent and undertail coverts	Unmarked lower belly to vent and marked undertail coverts.	Completely unmarked.	Well-marked lower belly to vent and marked undertail coverts.
4	Underwing pattern	Brown tips to underwing coverts and axillaries. Buff colour overall lacking contrasting dark trailing edge.	Largely white underwing with contrasting dark trailing edge to the wing. Some light brown tips to underwing coverts and axillaries.	Strongly marked underwings. Dark brown tips to underwing coverts and barred axillaries.

individuals.

The Common Gull, sometimes also known as the Mew Gull, is distributed much across the northern Eurasia, and has three subspecies, - *L. c. canus, L. c. kamtschatschensis,* and *L. c. heinei* (Moskoff et al. 2021). Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state that birds in our region are presumed, on geographical grounds, to be of the subspecies *heinei*, though the nominate *canus* is known to occur as near to our region as the Persian Gulf.

The subspecies identification of Common Gull has been discussed in detail by Adriaens & Gibbs (2016) and the same is covered in Table 1. We provide a commentary **[255–257]** on the three Common Gull individuals we found and the visible features that match *heinei*, in comparison with the other two less likely subspecies, arguing our birds to be a *L. c. heinei*. Lou Bertalan and other members in the Facebook Group *Western Palearctic Gulls* (Pereira 2024b) also suggested this subspecies for the December individual based on white underwing with contrasting darker remiges, and sparse head striation.

Praveen (2025) lists records of Common Gull from India, with records mostly from north-western India. The nearest records from this location are from Gujarat; near Diu and from Bhuj, Kachchh apart from Goa. Though noted from the neighbouring states of Gujarat and Goa, this species has never been reported from Maharashtra and this is the first record of Common Gull from Maharashtra. All previous records from India were of single birds and here we have two birds seen together with a potential third that occurred two months back.

We thank Hansel Pereira, Tanmayee Jadhav and Manasi Raut for joining us on the eventful birding session at Mamachiwadi. Special thanks to Prasad Ganpule and Ashwin Viswanathan for identification confirmation of the bird. We are grateful to the *Western Palearctic Gulls* Facebook Group and Lou Bertalan for help with subspecies identification.

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The Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica* from the Indian waters of Arabian Sea

Petrels, shearwaters and storm-petrels (Order: Procellariiformes) are truly pelagic birds spending most of their life at sea and only returning to land to breed. Most species are also highly migratory, following ocean currents and upwellings in search of food during the non-breeding season (Howell & Zufelt 2019; Harrison et al. 2021). Amongst these, the Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica* is plentiful in parts of the southern oceans, particularly in the southern Atlantic, but it does not appear to make a regular crossing through the tropical zone. In the southern Indian Ocean, this bird breeds on Kerguelen and Crozet Islands (Medrano & David 2023). During its non-breeding season, Black-bellied Storm-Petrels are highly pelagic birds, typically found close to or beyond the continental shelf, in deep waters (Harrison et al. 2021).

As a merchant navy professional, I have been sailing at sea for the past 25 years, and for the last ten years, I have developed a strong interest in birdwatching. During my time sailing in the Arabian Sea, I make an extra effort to look for seabirds. My first observation of a Black-bellied Storm-Petrel in the Arabian Sea was in the Omani waters on 21 July 2023, and on the same day I got pictures (Kumar 2023a, b). Two years later, I happened to be sailing in the Arabian Sea during the same month. However, my onward leg of the voyage from Sri Lanka to the Persian Gulf in the first week of July 2025 did not produce any Black-bellied Storm-Petrels. In contrast, during my return journey from the Persian Gulf to Singapore, the monsoon winds were at its peak. This resulted in strong southwest winds, rough seas, and waves up to 5m. To avoid the worst weather conditions, we planned our route closer to the Indian coast. The ship's course and the direction of the swell allowed me to continue birdwatching despite the rough seas. With the sea and swell hitting the ship's quarter rather than the bow, I was able to maintain a clear view forward.