

GULLS (*Laridae*)

**Oneida Lake Status:
Abundant**

- One of the most common shore birds
- Three different species occur on Oneida Lake
- Intense scavengers that eat almost everything

Gulls are larger and bulkier than terns, and are white with gray or black markings on the back, wings, and head. They have long, narrow wings adapted to soaring and have webbed feet for swimming. Gulls have strong bills for eating clams, fish, and insects, but are most successful as scavengers around boats, parking lots and landfills.

The most common gull on Oneida Lake is the herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), which has a wingspan of almost five feet. On Oneida Lake, herring gulls have increased from 22 pairs in 1979 to 71 pairs in 2006. In addition to the standard diet, herring gulls consume eggs and chicks of common terns and other water birds. They are aggressive and eat almost anything they can grasp.

The great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*) has a more northern range than that of the herring gull, and is the largest gull in the world. Coupled with its 5½ foot wingspan, this gull's aggressive behavior allows it to prey on almost anything it can catch. The great black-backed gull population on Oneida Lake has gone from one breeding pair in 1993 to 4 pairs in 2006.

The ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*) is smaller and less aggressive than both other gulls in the area. It is found in fields and landfills, and feeds on insects, worms, small mammals, and refuse. In the 1980's and early 1990's, thousands lived on Oneida Lake. Numbers soon dropped into the hundreds, and Oneida Lake had 220 pairs in 2006.



Herring gull on Oneida Lake (Photo credit: J Grummer)



Great black-backed gull (Photo credit: Tom Grey)



Ring billed gull on Oneida Lake (Photo credit: J Coleman)



Herring gull eggs (Photo credit: J Coleman)

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

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