Great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network
Marine Evidence–based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

Natalie Sweet

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A report from:
The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

**Please note.** This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/2210]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (https://www.marlin.ac.uk)

This review can be cited as:
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Great black-backed gull, *Larus marinus*, in flight.
Photographer: Dr Russel Wynn
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See online review for distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

Researched by: Natalie Sweet
Refereed by: Admin

Authority: Linnaeus, 1758

Other common names: -
Synonyms: -

**Summary**

**Description**

*Larus marinus* is the largest black-backed gull reaching lengths of up to 75 cm and wing span of up to 1.66 m. The body is bulky with a thick neck and heavy bill. Adult plumage is white, there is a dark grey mantle across the back and the top of the wings, with a trailing white edged and large mirrors (white patches on the wing tips). The bill is yellow with a red patch on the lower tip of the bill (gonys). The legs are a fleshy pink. Immatures display different markings at each age group, from first to third winters. Most first and second winter birds lack black on upperparts, with barred grey brown backs and wings and a black bill. Black upperparts develop gradually and the yellow bill is not fully apparent until maturity.

**Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland**

Found all around the UK coastline during the breeding season and also inland at other times of the year.

**Global distribution**

-

**Habitat**

The great black-backed gull principally frequents rocky coasts and islands during the breeding
season but is widespread in inland areas during the winter months. It may then be seen congregating at inland reservoirs, rubbish tips and nearby fields.

▼ Depth range

Identifying features

- Large size.
- Dark grey mantle.
- Yellow bill with a red patch on gonys of adults.
- Pink legs.

Additional information

*Larus marinus* is a scavenger and may eat birds, eggs, fish, offal, dead animals or rubbish. Please note that distribution maps are compiled using records for both breeding and wintering populations. For more specific distribution and abundance records please refer to maps compiled by The British Trust for Ornithology, available at [http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/previous/index.htm](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/previous/index.htm)

✔ Listed by

[Red List](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/previous/index.htm) [CMS](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/previous/index.htm)

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Bibliography

- none -

Datasets


Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre, 2017. BRERC species records recorded over 15 years ago. Occurrence dataset: https://doi.org/10.15468/h1ln5p accessed via GBIF.org on 2018-09-25.

Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre, 2017. BRERC species records within last 15 years. Occurrence dataset: https://doi.org/10.15468/vntg0x accessed via GBIF.org on 2018-09-25.


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