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a single flight without rest and usually takes just under 4 days. The passage over Ethiopia and down to the Rift Valley occur at very high altitudes, often exceeding 3,500 metres. At that altitude they find strong tailwinds that help them to reach their goal faster. A specific female Baltic gull, chose during the spring migration fly up to 5,500 meters height when she passed the Red Sea and the jet winds give her an impressive speed of 155 km/h during parts of the flight towards the Baltic sea.

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The Baltic Wings project aims at developing the central Baltic area as a nature and birdwatching destination through infrastructure investments, capacity building in co-operation with local entrepreneurs as well as other stakeholders, marketing and information. Read more at www.balticwings.org.



EU-project Baltic Wings

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Baltic Gull



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The Baltic gull is easy to recognize on its deep black back, wing and mantel, white body, yellow legs and slender/protracted body shape.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL is a seabird that breeds over much of northern Europe. The subspecies presented in this folder, the Baltic gull, (*Larus fuscus ssp fuscus*), is found mainly in Stockholm archipelago to Botnian bay and in the central Baltic Sea around Gotland. There are two other different sub species of lesser black-backed gull, the Atlantic *graellsii* type, in the British Isles and in Norway and the *intermedius*, along the North Sea coast from France, to Swedish west coast. Both subspecies have a grey wings and mantel compared to *fuscus*. Its densest occurrences in the Stockholm area have the Baltic gull in Stockholm's inner and northern archipelago. The Baltic gull is recognized on its white body and sooty black wing upper/back and yellow legs. It has the darkest mantel of all gulls. Baltic gulls are smaller and slimmer than their relative the great black backed gull (*Larus marinus*).

The Baltic gull is our country's most pelagic bird that spends much of its time far out to sea. They can daily fly well over 100 km in their search for food.

It feeds mainly from sprat and small herring, but they are opportunist. They eat what people can offer. Many children have cried during visits at the outdoor museum



Baltic gulls, Herring gulls and Mew gulls catching small fish scarred by the propellers of the large ferry.

Skansen in Stockholm when cheeky Baltic gulls have stolen their buns/ice creams/sausages. They have also adapted to cities and breed on rooftops and man-made constructions in Stockholm and Helsinki. Some of the Baltic gulls breed on islands in the fairway towards Stockholm, i.e. Fjäderholmarna. This is an adaptation to the extensive ferry traffic that comes into Stockholm's ports. The large propellers of the ferries swirl up small fish to the surface and this is exploited by Baltic and other gulls.

Baltic Lesser black-backed Gull – threatened

Since the 1970s, the Baltic gull has decreased from 17,000 pairs in Sweden to the current level of about 4,500 pairs. The level has been constant around of 4,000 to 5,000 pairs the last 20 years. The world population is now estimated to be below 20,000 pairs. The direct cause of population decline is not fully known. A lot of nestlings in the Baltic area die early. Elevated mercury and organochlorine substances can be linked to poor breeding success in especially Finnish colonies. Studies in Swedish colonies show that survival is generally higher but predation of herring gull and sea eagles



Approximate flight route for a larger number of herring gulls (just over 15 individuals) with GPS logs. It is a fairly unified corridor across Eastern Europe down to the Istanbul area, then to the next stop over point at the Nile Delta/Sinai. After two weeks they continue across the Arabian Peninsula and then follow the rift valley towards the final destination, at Lake Victoria in East Africa.

on the young and eggs, can affect the number of young .

In order to study Baltic gull more, BirdLife Sweden has started a project around Endangered Coastal Birds where some studies are focused on the Baltic Gull. In the study so-called GPS logs have been attached to Baltic gulls. The GPS log gives the position, speed, flight altitude and a number of other parameters up to every 5 minutes from each bird. This equipment allow us to follow the movements of the Baltic gulls throughout the year cycle.

Baltic gulls is a long-distance migrant who spends the winter mainly at Lake Victoria or other big lakes in East Africa. The Baltic gulls leave our area in the direction of the Black Sea and western Turkey is the first stop for a few days. The passage over Eastern Europe is usually carried out in a continuous flight and takes two days. The next stage of the migration, across the Mediterranean sea towards the Nile delta and Sinai takes one day. Here the birds are often roosting for a couple of weeks. The last leg of the migration to East Africa takes place in