

The Insect Prey of the Laughing Gull: The ability of many gull (Laridae: Larinae) species to exploit ephemeral food sources is well known. One such source is flying insects taken by aerial "hawking." This behavior in North American gulls is reviewed by Pitocchelli and Capainolo (*Kingbird* 40:88-89; 1990). They record Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*) hawking for "gnat-sized or smaller" prey, while Lauro (*Kingbird* 27:87: 1977) reports them feeding on a flying ant swarm. In this note I report Laughing Gull taking much larger flying insects and, related to this, the identity of large insects found in the stomach of a Laughing Gull from a neighboring area. On 11 July 1992, I observed a flock of about 40 Laughing Gull hawking for large insects flying about 10 meters above the dunes at Fort Tilden, near the western end of the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens County, New York. The birds, all adults, pursued the insects, caught them with an audible snap of the bill and swallowed them in flight. I was unable to obtain a specimen of the prey species, which appeared to be a large coleopteran. Recently at the American Museum of Natural History, I dissected a female Laughing Gull (AMNH skeleton # 21244) salvaged on 8 August 1992 from John F. Kennedy International Airport, about seven miles northeast of Fort Tilden. Its stomach contained three Green June Beetles (*Cotinis nitida*), each measuring 24 x 16 mm, one Dogday Cicada (*Tibicen chloromera*) measuring 41 x 18 mm, and several small crab legs. Given that insects comprise about 60% protein and 11% carbohydrate (dry weight) and yield 0.62 calories per gram, compared to 0.56 cal per gm for beef (D. B. Madsen, *Nat. Hist.* 7/89: 22-25, 1989), large insects such as these probably represent a significant, if short-lived, source of nutrition during the summer months.

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