



The North West Black Headed Gull Study

One year on

In the spring of 2011 a colour ringing project began on Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) in the North-west of England. The main aims of the study are to look in to:

- Dispersal from natal colony (Killington Reservoir)
- To study winter site fidelity (At all other sites, where adults can be caught)
- Interchange between study sites.
- Longevity
- To document general movements within the UK & abroad.

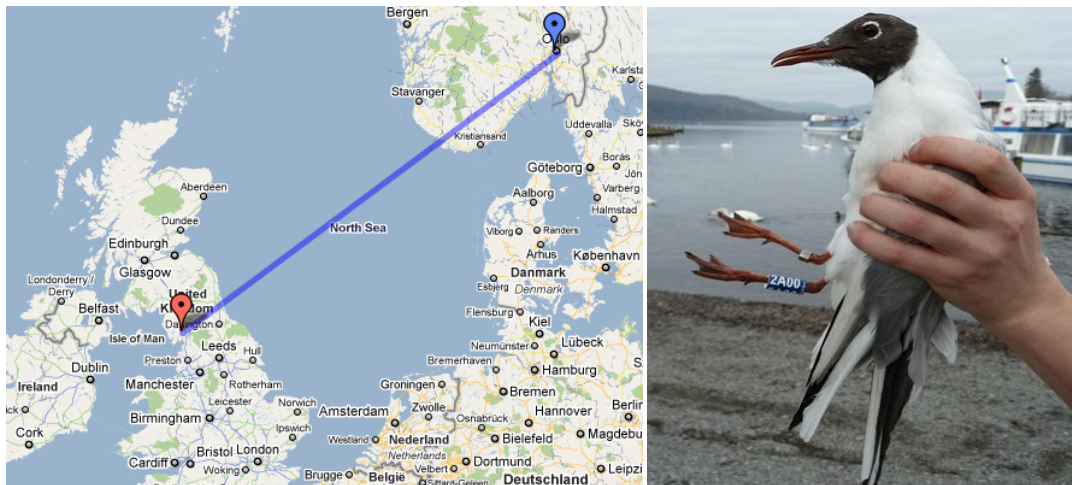
The project got off to a slow start with only six adult birds captured and colour marked in the spring of 2011. However we quickly received reports of two of these birds abroad; one seen in Norway and the other in Lithuania! These movements are in-keeping with theory that birds wintering in Britain move north and east in the spring towards Scandinavian and Eastern European breeding grounds. Both of these birds have since been re-sighted on the same wintering grounds, so we are building up some good data already thanks to the simple addition of a colour ring.

Similarly, having metal ringed over eight hundred chicks at the Killington Reservoir colony since 2009 and receiving very few recoveries, we managed to colour mark eighty-six chicks in 2011. Of these, just two have been re-sighted; one at Loch Ryan in Stanraer and the other at Quilmas, A Coruna in Spain! This is an unusual movement in the context of UK ringed Black-headed Gulls as according to BTO online, only 104 British ringed Black-headed Gulls have previously been recovered in Spain. Interestingly, two more birds ringed at Killington Reservoir have also moved to Scotland. One of these birds was sighted at Loch Ryan, Stranraer whilst the other was sighted at Alnwickhill, Edinburgh. These were both adult birds caught in the summer at Killington. On the 10th February 2012 we also caught our first foreign control; an adult from Lithuania. The metal ring was worn and damaged and so we replaced it with a BTO ring and a brand new colour ring. On the same day we also caught a Norwegian ringed bird first ringed in 1998.

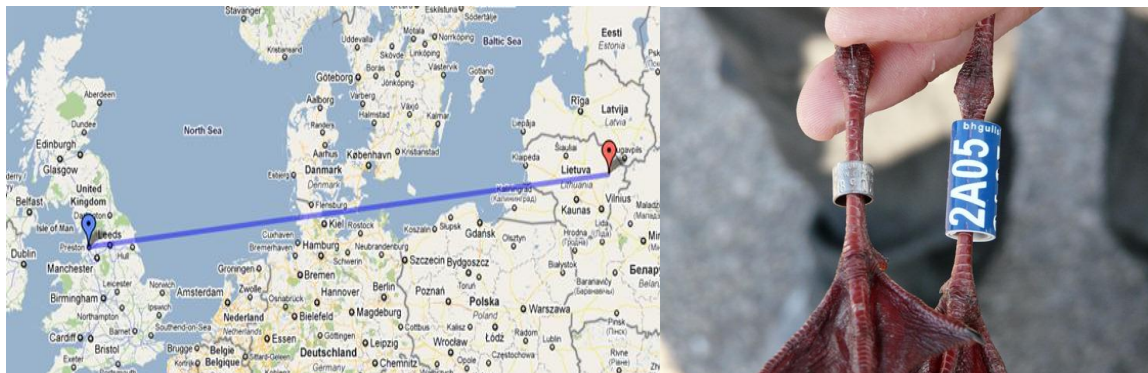
The decision to have an email address printed on the colour ring has proved very successful, with several direct emails to bhgulls@gmail.com enabling us to quickly process sightings and reply to observers. A report from Lithuania was a result of the ring of 2A05 being photographed, the email address read and the sighting sent straight on.

Having colour ringed the first bird of the project on the 1st March 2011 at Bowness in Cumbria, we have now managed to colour mark 150 Black-headed Gulls; sixty-four full grown birds (caught at various sites) and eighty-six chicks marked at the Killington Reservoir colony in Cumbria. The plan is to continue catching and colour marking full grown birds throughout 2012 and to continue our efforts on the Killington Colony in the summer.

Highlighted below are three of the most interesting movements to date.



2A00 was ringed on 01/03/2011 at Bowness-on-Windermere and was then re-sighted by Robin Sellers on 17/03/2011 at the same site. It was then reported by Morten Helberg in Radhuskaia, Oslo Havn, Oslo Norway on 24/03/2011. A movement of 1026km in seven days. This bird was subsequently re-sighted at Bowness on the 28/11/2011 and on several dates since.



2A05 was ringed on 09/03/2011 at Preston Docks, Lancs when we managed to catch 5 adults during an afternoons ringing. It was first sighted in Utena on 05/04/2011, 28 days after ringing & then again on 08/04/2011 – 1837km in total. The bird was then re-sighted back at Preston Docks on 11/12/2011, returning for the winter.



2A44 was ringed on 08/06 /2011 as a chick at Killington Reservoir in Cumbria. It was then sighted on 11/12/2011 at Quilma, A Coruna in Spain by Manuel Figueiras. A movement of 1358km, SSW in 186 days. This is the one of only two birds colour ringed as pullus to be recovered away from the Killington Reservoir colony. Photo by Manuel Figueiras.

Colour Rings

The Colour Scheme is as follows:

- Full grown birds - One dark blue darvic on the left leg with white lettering and a four digit code.
- Pullus – One dark blue darvic on the right leg with white lettering and a four digit code.
- All codes start with the number 2 followed by one letter and two numbers. E.G. 2A06
- A BTO metal ring is placed on the corresponding leg.

The e-mail address bhgulls@gmail.com is also printed on the ring.



Contact details

All sightings should be sent to the email address of bhgulls@gmail.com

Sightings will be replied to by Ciaran Hatsell or Kane Brides.

With many thanks to all those who assisted with the ringing of birds and also a very big thank you to all those who reported ring sightings to us.

Mandy Alderson	Stephen Halliwell
Chris Baines	Lee Harrison
Peter Bainbridge	Clive Hartley
Jez Blackburn	Morten Helberg
Chris Bridge	Zac Hinchcliffe
Craig Brookes	Carsten Lome
Gavin Chambers	Heather Mcginty
Gillian Dinsmore	Janine Parry
Marcin Faber	David Peplow
Manuel Figueiras	Chris Piner
Declan De Freitas	Kev Scott (Manx Ringing Group)
Sean Gray (Manx Ringing Group)	Robin Sellers



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