

UNUSUAL MORTALITY IN CALIFORNIA GULLS.—Between 25 June and 2 July, 1976 while visiting the white pelican nesting islands on Chase Lake, Stutsman County, North Dakota, I encountered five dead adult California gulls (*Larus californicus*) with enlarged throats. Closer examination revealed a partially swallowed rodent lodged in the throats of all five birds. The rodents were adult Richardson's ground squirrels (*Spermophilus richardsonii*). The California gulls, being scavengers, had engulfed the apparently road-killed ground squirrels and then flew back to their nesting area on Chase Lake to feed their 4-5 week-old young. Probably somewhat exhausted from their return flight, they arrived on the island and attempted to regurgitate the ground squirrels which, much to the birds' misfortune, were too large to either regurgitate or swallow. Their fate sealed, the helpless birds succumbed to suffocation and lay dead upon their nesting ground.

California gulls were observed feeding upon the smaller thirteen-lined ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) along roadsides with no ill effects. The smaller ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*) nests on these islands also and I found no evidence of similar mortality in this species.—Gary R. Lingle, Department of Forestry, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan 49931.