



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
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Western gull (*Larus occidentalis*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/western-gull-larus-occidentalis/

By
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The Western gull is a large, white-headed gull that lives on the west coast of North America between British Columbia and Baja, California. This species is an exclusively marine gull that is seldom encountered inland. It nests on offshore islands and rocks along the coast as well as islands inside estuaries. Within nesting colonies, long term pairs aggressively defend territories whose borders may shift slightly from year to year, but are maintained for the life of the male. The Western gull typically lives 15 years, but can live as long as 25 years.



Western gull (*Larus occidentalis*)

Western gulls are omnivores and eat a variety of things including fish and other aquatic invertebrates. Like many other gull species, Western gulls drop hard-shelled items from the air to break them on hard surfaces. The Western gull is highly opportunistic and will steal unguarded eggs or chicks of other species. They will also situate colonies near sea lion breeding colonies and scavenge dead pups.

Because of their opportunistic nature and adaptability, gulls can thrive in urban environment. However, living in close proximity to human environs means these birds are also subject to abnormal environmental pressures. For example, when their normal sources of food are diminished, gulls are quick to take advantage of an easy food source such as a trash and leftover scraps. By exploiting unnatural food resources their population may be growing larger than it would normally thus upsetting the ecosystem balance. Next time you visit the beach be sure to take your extra food home and pick up any trash to prevent Western gulls and other seabirds from eating foods outside their typical diet.