

First in a series of *Feature Articles*

(Reprinted with permission)

Hop or jump: Autumn migration strategies of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* as revealed by satellite trackingKube, J.¹, A.J. Helbig¹, R. Juvaste², K. Pedersen³, C. Rahbek³ & P. Saurola²¹University of Greifswald, Vogelwarte Hiddensee, D-18565 Kloster, Germany²Zoological Museum, University of Helsinki, P. Rautatiekatu 13, SF-00100 Helsinki, Finland³Zoological Museum, Universitetsparken 15, DK-2100 Copenhagen, DenmarkTransmitter attachment tests in captive *Larus argentatus*K. Pedersen and C. Rahbek catching *L. f. intermedius* Saltholm Island, Denmark*L. f. intermedius* "Benny" with 20g PICO PTT of Microwave Telemetry, Inc. USA

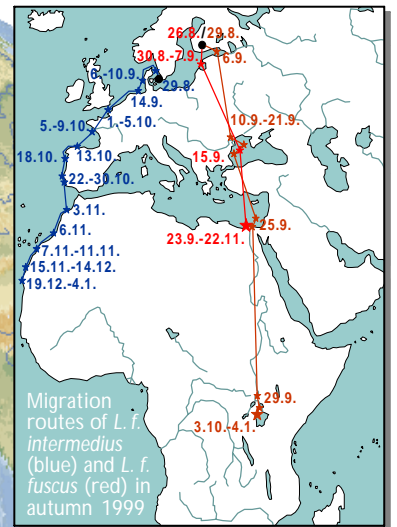
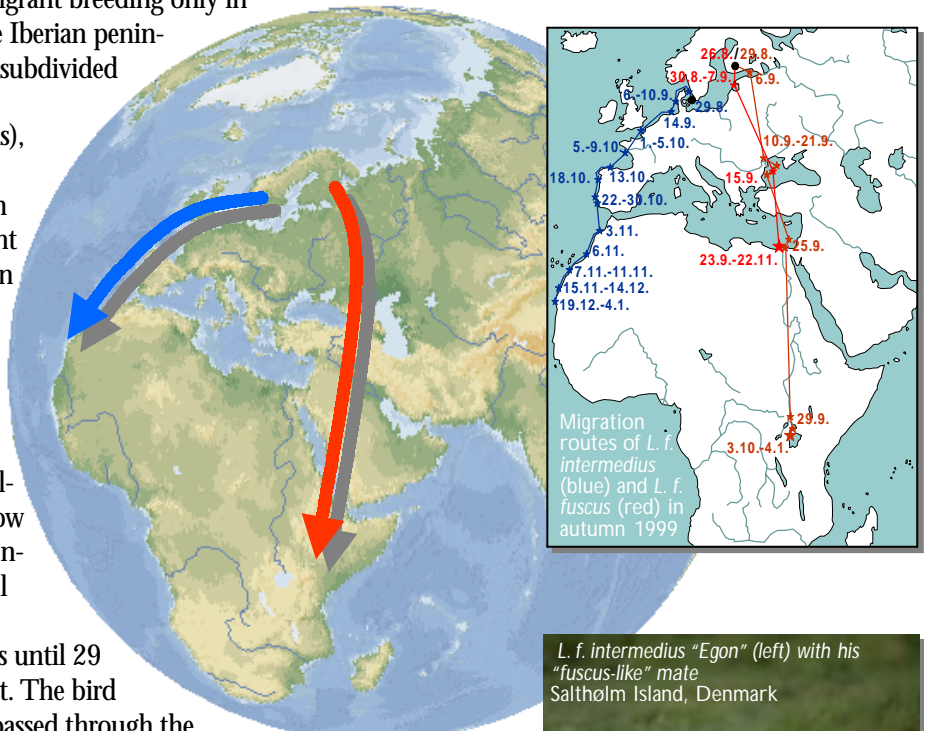
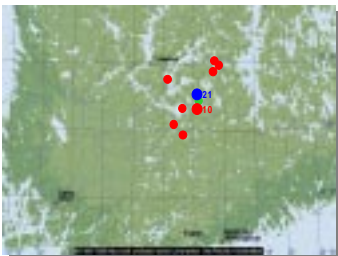
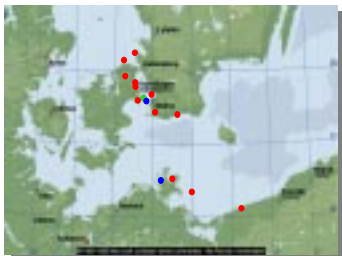
The Lesser Black-backed Gull is a long-distance migrant breeding only in North and West Europe from the White Sea to the Iberian peninsula and wintering mostly in Africa. The species is subdivided into three subspecies:

- *Larus f. fuscus* (northern Norway and eastwards),
- *L. f. intermedius* (southern Scandinavia), and
- *L. f. graellsii* (Wadden Sea and westwards) with *L. f. graellsii* being only a short distance migrant wintering along the East Atlantic coast between Britain and Morocco.

Three breeding males of the subspecies *L. f. intermedius* in Denmark (Saltholm Island, Øresund) and another three breeding males of the subspecies *Larus f. fuscus* in Finland (Iso-Roinevesi, freshwater lake near Tampere) were fitted with satellite transmitters during the hatching period to follow their autumn migration. Three birds, one from Denmark and two from Finland, could be tracked until December 1999.

All three birds remained in their breeding areas until 29 August. The Danish *L. f. intermedius* migrated west. The bird stayed in the Wadden Sea until late September. It passed through the Channel, across Brittany and along the coast of the Iberian Peninsula during October. The wintering quarter North of Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, was reached in late November.

The Finnish *Larus f. fuscus* migrated south. They spent a week in the Gulf of Finland before flying nonstop to the northwestern Black Sea on 10 September. Both birds stayed offshore there for ten days. The Delta of the River Nile, Egypt, was reached in late September. One individual stayed near Alexandria, apparently its final destination. The other bird went further south to Lake Victoria. It reached its wintering grounds near Kampala, Uganda, on 29 September. Its final nonstop journey of about 3500 km lasted 92 hours (38 km/h).

*L. f. intermedius* "Egon" (left) with his "fuscus-like" mate Saltholm Island, Denmark

Breeding area: Locations recorded by satellite telemetry of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. f. intermedius* (left) and *L. f. fuscus* (right). Records of individual birds are shown either by blue ("Egon" left, "Jaska" right) or red dots ("Benny" left, "Eero" right). Only high quality locations from June to August with an accuracy better than 10 km are shown. Locations of the breeding colony are marked by a green dot. Both *L. f. intermedius* were feeding at sea, sometimes far away from their colony. Both *L. f. fuscus* were feeding at freshwater lakes close to their colony.

Wintering area: Locations recorded by satellite telemetry of two Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. f. intermedius* (left) and *L. f. fuscus* (right). The *L. f. intermedius* "Benny" was migrating until late November. The *L. f. fuscus* "Jaska" reached its final destination already on 29 September 1999. Daytime-records (squares) and nighttime-records (triangles) are presented separately for October (blue), November (red), and December (grey). Only high quality locations with an accuracy better than 10 km are shown.