

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* preys on a Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* in Tobago, West Indies

On 14 March 2010, I witnessed a Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* with a Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* in its bill on the shoreline vegetation near the jetty on Little Tobago Island, Tobago. The elaenia was struggling to escape. The gull thrashed the elaenia and then flew with its prey to the edge of the surf, where it bashed the elaenia in the water until it appeared to be dead, then the gull swallowed it whole.

The Laughing Gull is described as having a “broad diet” of

“aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, including earthworms, flying insects, beetles, ants, and other insects, snails, crabs, crab eggs, crab larvae, fish, squid, eggs and downy tern chicks” (Burger 2020). There is no documentation listed of the gull taking other birds. It is possible that the elaenia was sick, injured, or in some other distress, which enabled the opportunistic Laughing Gull to take advantage of its unfortunate situation.



Fig. 1. Laughing Gull eating a Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Little Tobago, Tobago WI, 14 March 2010. Photo Matt Kelly.

REFERENCES

Burger, J. 2020. Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*), version 1.0. In Birds of the World (P. G. Rodewald, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. [Online] Available at <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.laugul.01> (Accessed 22/01/23).

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