

**First Place Writing – Age 10-13**  
**John Garrett – Pasadena, CA**

**Gull**  
**(With Apologies to Allen Ginsberg)**

I.

I saw the best birders of my generation destroyed by madness, bleary-eyed exhausted  
unshaven,  
dragging themselves through the driest deserts at dawn looking for an accidental,  
angelheaded twitchers burning because of the missing X on the sacred list in the  
geography of the ABA Area,  
who drive hollow-eyed through the infinite star-filled darkness across the supernatural  
desert to check off that startling arch-nemesis the Ross's Gull which  
blindly blundered into the blistering depths of the Salton Sea,  
who unconsciously raced from remote ragged reckless sky islands of electric southeast  
Arizona where they had desperately sought the barbarian Aztec Thrush  
that fortunately strayed across the Mexican border,  
who later will irrationally stomp away from that revolting California Valley of the  
Emperor to dabble for a dabbler, the sickle-shaped-feathered vagrant from  
Siberia the Falcated Duck whose low whistle beckons them north,  
who, like me, have crazily flocked to this well-reputed Mecca of wild winged beasts,  
with talismanic names like frigatebird, spoonbill, and booby, to talk  
deliriously of leg coloration, primary projections, gonydeal angles, and  
first-cycle hybrids,

who, like me, expletively raged when that outrageous gull suddenly savagely  
mysteriously disappeared moments before their tardy arrival.

## II.

What sphinx of lifelists and Big Days bashed open skulls and ate up their brains and  
imagination?

Checklist! Twitcher! Filth! Unobtainable mega-rarity! Red-footed Falcon at Martha's  
Vineyard! Ringed Storm-Petrel off California! Black-headed Nightingale-  
Thrush in Lower Rio Grande Valley! Brown Hawk-Owl in Saint Paul's  
Island! Cape Verde Shearwater off North Carolina! Ross's Gull at Red  
Hill Marina!

Checklist! Checklist! Nightmare of Checklist! Checklist the loveless! Mental Checklist!  
Checklist the heavy judger of birders!

Checklist the incomprehensible prison! Checklist whose soul is vagrants and endless  
travel! Checklist whose machinery is RBAs and binoculars!

They broke their necks lifting binoculars to heaven! They scanned through numberless  
'pipers, plovers, terns, and gulls, searching searching searching for *rosea*,  
that infernal heavenly pink bird!

Silence! Despair! Hopelessness! Holy laughter! Insane laughter! They saw it all! They  
saw nothing! The wild eyes! The sightless eyes! The bleeding eyes that  
never saw the savage Ross's Gull!

## III.

Ross's Gull I'm with you at Red Hill Marina  
where you made international news

I'm with you at Red Hill Marina

where you made the cover of *Western Birds*

I'm with you at Red Hill Marina

where you made the cover of *North American Birds*

I'm with you at Red Hill Marina

where you gave gleaming dazzling Xs to so many timely untardy listers

I'm with you at Red Hill Marina

where you gave false hope to so many eager birders

I'm with you at Red Hill Marina

in my dreams you fly dripping from a sea-journey to the smooth expanse  
of that red rock into the vivid field of my scope.