



Until yesterday it looked as if I were about to follow the example of Sydney Smith, the witty clergyman of one hundred and fifty years ago. He claimed, "I never read a book before reviewing it, it prejudices a man so."

For this issue of EBBA News I planned to review the first volume of the series entitled "Handbook of North American Birds." The series is sponsored jointly by the American Ornithologists Union and the New York State Museum and Science Service. It is issued by the Yale University Press and edited by Ralph Palmer. The publication date in the first and only volume now in print is 1962, but do you suppose I could locate a copy? Not in the library of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia; not in the offices of the curators of ornithology in that institution. (They probably keep their copies at home.)

My original plan had been to compare the new with Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds." It began to look as if Bent would win by default.

There is a purpose in presenting the preceding detail. Some ten days ago the Academy librarian told me that volume one of the Handbook had been ordered. So you see what can be accomplished by constantly demanding a particular book, and you'll know how to proceed in the event you can't at first locate a copy of this Handbook.

Volume One includes Loons through Flamingoes. Tentative contents for the next four volumes finish with Swallows. It will take at least two more volumes to get through the A. O. U. check list. Volume One retails for \$15.00, so it is evident why most of us must depend on libraries. We will all benefit by a survey of the first volume and the succeeding ones as they appear.

In this first book there is an introduction stating the scope of the work, and including valuable details. There is a color chart following the Villalobos system. There are almost life-sized black and white sketches of bird anatomy showing in detail how to take measurements. I have a future date with myself to give this section very careful study as a "must" for banding data accuracy.

The outline of reproduction routines is something I have not encountered previously. Under the classification "Single Sexual Nexus" the editor notes:

1. Life-long mating until the death of one partner.
2. Mating sustained for more than one breeding season.
3. Mating seasonal, through only one breeding season.
4. Mating lasting through only one cycle.
5. Temporary mating.

Under "Multiple Sexual Nexus" there are

1. Bigamy: two female partners during a breeding cycle, but more attention given to mates than mere copulation. This can be contemporaneous or successive.
2. Polygamy: more than two female partners during breeding cycle, but more attention given to mates than mere copulation. This, again, can be contemporaneous or successive.
3. Harem Polygamy
4. Promiscuity
5. Polyandry

In considering birds by species, the following outline is standard: description including measurements, sub-species, field identification, voice, habitat, distribution with map, migration, banding status, reproduction, survival, habits, and food.

In every case I had time to note, the banding data was allowed but a brief paragraph. Figures were given for the total number banded, the number of returns, the number of recoveries; and brief mention was made of the areas where most of the banding had been done. Even though as a bander, I would have appreciated more detail, I had to admit that there is a limit to the amount of data that can be included in 550 pages.

The paragraphs dealing with reproduction were broken down as follows: pair formation, pair bond, selection of breeding territory, mutual display, copulation, nests, laying season, clutch sizes, incubation, replacement clutches, hatching success, age at first flight.

The colored plates are few. The color chart mentioned covers a double page; plate 2 shows four plumage variations of the northern fulmar; 3, a comparison of cormorant heads; 4, four herons: great blue, Wurdemann's, great white, and the common or Eurasian gray; 5, various heron bills; 6, the ibises.

The black and white drawings are many and good. One full page that I particularly noted shows positions of the western grebe, such as flight,

race, dance, display. Anyone who saw Disney's Water Bird film will appreciate these positions. The contributing artists are too many to be noted here.

A proper reviewer at this point would list a book's shortcomings. It is only a personal idiosyncrasy that impels me to think of a "handbook" as an easily manipulated publication like Peterson's field guides. The Handbook being here reviewed required two hands to hold it.

Instead of winning it would seem as if Bent had lost. But his classic Life Histories have something the current Handbook can't include. This will be revealed in the next number of EBBA News.

313 Sharp Avenue, Glenolden, Pa.

WEEKEND FOR THE GULLS

By Mary Lou Petersen (Reprinted from Iowa Bird Life)

Bird watchers come in assorted shapes, sizes, and interests. Most bird watchers are considered only slightly sub-normal by the unfortunate, non-bird watching masses. Of all the types of birders the bird bander is by far the most unusual. Banding is not a normal hobby. It becomes an all-consuming passion. A truly addicted mass bander will risk life and limb to add a species to his year's banding record or his life's banding record. Each year he plots and plans so that he may band an even greater number of birds than he did in the previous year. Last year's record is a challenge that must be superseded in the present season. With this explanation of the bander's craving desire for more species and greater numbers, you will be better equipped to understand the motives for a gull banding weekend.

July 4th, 1963. Situated in the unpredictable waters of the mighty Lake Michigan, a few hundred feet from shore, are tiny points of land: Gravel Island, Spider Island and what we call the reef. These islands off the coast of Door County, Wisconsin are, for the most part, inhabited by gulls. Gravel Island was a home for Herring Gulls this season. Spider Island and the reef were possessed by both Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. Our week-end was entirely for the gulls and we spent hours in the blazing sun grabbing squawking young gulls and clamping rings on them.

My first experience banding gulls was on Gravel Island. As we approached the island the adult Herring Gulls became more and more disturbed. Circling above us and screaming at our approach, but maintaining a healthy distance; they resented our arrival. As you land at the home of hundreds of gulls (at first you believe there are certainly thousands) the olfactory nerves send protest to the brain. Soon, however, they fatigue.

It doesn't take long to become adept at spotting the downy young huddled in the cracks of rocks, under grass, or on open ground. They