

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.

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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 Last year's record is a challenge that must be superseded in the present season.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

must hide for infanticide is common among gulls. This is evidenced by the number of dead that are found. Unusual as it may seem, the young gulls nearly able to fly are far more docile than the cute, little chick-sized young. Often, you may approach a good-sized juvenile from the rear, reach under the bird and grab a leg (we always band the right), and clamp on a ring without a squawk. The little ones run, yelp and try to bite. As the little ones scream, the parents circle and scream above you.

Banding on Gravel Island was not at all difficult and by mid-morning we had 149 young gulls banded and we headed our dingy toward the reef. At the reef my gull banding desire suddenly dissipated. Here there were at least 400 pairs of gulls nesting. The majority of them were Ring-billed and as I soon discovered the Ring-billed Gulls are much more aggressive than the Herring Gulls.

As I looked at the screaming, stinking, milling hoard of gulls on the southern end of the reef, I panicked. I just could not stand that many adult gulls above me, diving, screaming and bombarding the ground below them. I remained on the northern end of the reef with the passive Herring Gulls, while my "go get 'em and band 'em" husband charged into the fray. He double-timed into the milling white mass waving his pliers in his right hand and wearing a stringer of 100 number five bands around his neck. He was protected from aerial attack by a large, wide-brimmed, disreputable cowboy hat. However, his shirt and pants showed signs of direct hits.

Left to my own devices, I searched out every young Herring Gull on the quiet northern end and gradually worked more and more southward toward the Ring-billed suburbs. I worked my way to the edge of the large group of gulls, concerning myself only with Herring Gulls. Coming upon three fairly good-sized young gulls, I prepared to get them banded. I was on my knees bending over these docile youngsters when a sudden shriek and rush of pounding feathers startled me. It was a mixed-up Ring-billed parent protesting my presence, apparently so near its nest. I continued banding and was swooped upon twice more. Each time the irate gull came closer. I crouched and watched as it circled, sighted and dived again. But this time, when it was nearly upon me, I leaped up waving my pliers and shouting. The bird veered sharply upward and then headed toward open water, to regain its shaken composure no doubt. Feeling a warm, nasty, self-satisfaction and having thus vented by frustrations, I charged into the Ring-billed group and grabbed young gulls for my husband to band.

By mid-afternoon we ran out of Ring-billed bands and we also ran out of Herring Gulls to band with the remaining size six bands. We decided to quit for the day and return to Rowley's Bay. As I said, mass banders risk life and limb for their hobby and this time was no exception. During our banding, the wind shifted and the water became treacherous and our day's adventures were far from over. But, that is another story.