

PROBLEMS OF A GULL BANDER
OR
TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN
By William Pepper

There are many ways and methods of catching young gulls. I have yet to decide which produces the best haul.

Once having arrived at the nesting grounds one has to decide which to use: Plan A, "The scientific method," where one divides the colony into exact areas and covers each square methodically, foot by foot; or Plan B, the aimless wander back and forth throughout the area.

Having chosen one of these there still remain other questions. Does one frantically run after each and every young miler one sees disappearing into the distance, disregarding the dangers of stepping on a youngster hidden in the ever-present poison ivy? Does one peer into every bush and under every clump of grass in one's path, or just walk until one sees a victim - or part of him - sticking out from under the ivy? From a few test runs of these last choices I think the latter brings the best results. But I'm not sure yet.

Then there is the question of what to do when one comes upon two or more half grown young ones and is able to catch them all at once. Just try holding even two almost full grown young black-backs by yourself, and try to band them without being well bitten and scratched in the attempt. I have even more or less sat on one while working on the other. But a person has so many tender spots...

One should also try to time one's banding to periods preceding feeding times of the gulls - whenever that may be? There is nothing I know of that makes one more attractive, on returning to one's boarding house, than to have received a young gull's last meal down one's entire front.

A few more random bits of bitter wisdom: don't kid yourself into believing one of these teenagers that can just fly will soon tire and you can catch up to him. I've found I usually tire much faster. There is also the lesson to be learned from trying to catch a youngster that has run across the beach and into shallow water. It's no use following - unless this effort is really an excuse to enjoy a refreshing swim. These escapees can swim faster than you, and seem to enjoy just drawing you on. The best plan here is to leave the area for a short time, and then return along the beach to where the swimmers may have, as they often do, returned to shore for a siesta in the grass just above the beach.

Having decided the above problems and learned your lessons, odorous and otherwise, all you have to do now is to tell the difference between a young herring gull and a young black-back, at all stages of their childhood, wet or dry. The one you mistake will be the one that is recovered by the expert - (he even collected it) - I think just to prove me wrong.

Having decided which gull it is, be sure and place the band on a leg with the band numbers upright when the bird is standing, so those reading bands by sight, i.e. binocular experts, won't have to circle the gull on their heads through the garbage dumps. They too must, sometimes, be just what the "Oceanview" enjoys as guests! - "We hope you enjoyed your stay here as it will be your last!"

I wish I knew all the answers - if you do let me know - and don't forget the poison ivy lotion. Perhaps I'll stick to banding robins hereafter - there's much less of a problem.

N.B. This is paper #4F of the * S.A.S.P.I.N.

* The Society against Scientific Papers in the News. Unintelligent agent 3692.

MORE . . . ON ADULT OYSTERCATCHER
By LeRoy Wilcox

I have more information on adult Oystercatcher, band 575-25607, as reported and illustrated in Jan-Feb issue of EBBA News. I first caught this adult on June 7, 1963 and again caught it on its nest on June 26, 1964. This pair raised one young which was flying by August 7. They apparently remained in the Moriches Inlet area until October.

Then on October 20, 1964 the three were flying west on the south side of Great South Bay, opposite Patchogue, when the above adult was shot by a duck hunter. This is about 14 miles west of Moriches Inlet. The gunners had never seen an Oystercatcher before and thought they were Buffleheads.

They apparently were on their way south to spend the winter in the Carolinas or Georgia. The question now arises -- will the surviving adult return with another mate to again nest at Moriches? I believe the same nesting area will continue to be used provided that at least one adult survives.

I believe it is rather unusual to get 2 recoveries on the same shorebird in one year.

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Everybody's coming to EBBA's annual meeting. . . .YOU be sure to come, too!