

years. The bird was saturated with the oil; not a feather appeared natural, but each one was plastered down so as to be useless. After losing the first symptoms of fright, the Loon endeavored to preen its oil-soaked plumage. My wife, meanwhile, came to the rescue with several applications of lard, followed by warm rinsings. This restored the plumage to a more natural condition, the back and neck losing the dirty, greasy appearance, while the underparts came out a beautiful white. Apparently, however, it was too late. The Loon steadily failed and became weaker each hour. Its whole system seemed to be saturated with oil and the intestines gave evidence of a violent reaction. Twice we carried the bird down to the water that day, hoping it might recover in more natural surroundings. After a preliminary dive, however, the Loon would turn back to shore utterly exhausted; the breakers would practically wash it to land. The great problem was that of feeding and all of this had to be done by compulsion. As the bird grew weaker it became tamer and would allow its back to be stroked, and other handling with no attempt at fighting such as it showed at first. When we scratched its neck or back, the Loon made a little crooning noise and plainly showed its pleasure. After the second day it grew worse and died. A Wilson's Petrel was subsequently picked up on the beach with feathers similarly oil-soaked.

The changing over of many former coaling steamships and the building of the prevailing oil-driven type does not augur well for off shore birds. Nothing short of a rigid federal law relative to the disposal of waste oil at sea can save multitudes of our seabirds from destruction.—AARON C. BAGG, *Holyoke, Mass.*

**Fish-catching by the Black Skimmer.**—Having enjoyed the editor's privilege of reading Mr. Arthur's most interesting paper on the Black Skimmer which appears on the earlier pages of the present issue of 'The Auk,' some months before it was sent to the printer, I was naturally fully posted on the question at issue, and keen for any opportunity to watch the actions of the bird which might fall to my lot.

On July 17, 1921, while traversing the inland waterway some miles above Atlantic City, N. J., we encountered a few Skimmers one of which, skimming the surface in the ordinary way, passed between our motor boat and the black mud bank which loomed above the water at low tide marking the inner bank of the channel. The bird was not more than 35 feet distant and I caught and followed him with my binoculars. Just as he was opposite the boat he drove his bill into the water and seized a fish about three inches in length, holding it transversely between the mandibles, and flew off with it across the marsh. While this corroborates Mr. Arthur's statement as to the character of the Skimmer's food it demonstrates that it sometimes, though no doubt rarely, secures its food while skimming, a fact that had escaped his careful observation. I could think of no possible benefit to be derived by the bird from the unequal mandibles

when catching fish during flight. It was not "ploughing the main" at the time, and it would seem as if the peculiar bill must have been a hindrance to its success rather than an aid. My observation therefore in no way explains the peculiar structure of the bill but as a slight addition to Mr. Arthur's paper it seems worthy of record.—WITMER STONE, *Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.*

**Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) Captured by Snapping Turtle.—**

While employed during the past summer on the collecting crew of the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, a very curious incident came to my attention. At the time, it did not occur to me that it was unusual, but at the suggestion of Mr. Henry W. Henshaw I am submitting this account for publication.

One morning in July, two of the collectors, Dr. H. B. Baker and Mr. Fred Erskine, while working at a fresh-water pond near Woods Hole saw a Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) struggling violently in the water. It seemed as if something had caught it from below and was trying to draw it under. The men secured a boat at once and rowed out to the scene. Once, before they reached the spot, the gull was drawn completely under, but immediately came to the surface again. When the men reached it they pulled it from the water. Its captor, a large snapping turtle, with carapace nearly eighteen inches long, did not release its grip and was hauled from the water with the bird.

The abdomen of the gull was torn completely open and the viscera mangled, so the bird was immediately killed by one of the men. The dead bird and the turtle were brought to the laboratory. I had an opportunity to examine the former. It was an adult, apparently healthy, and with both wings sound. The turtle was killed and its stomach contents examined by a well-known physiologist, Dr. McCullom. No bird remains were found. Mr. Henshaw told me that it was very unusual for a gull to be caught unawares while sitting on the water unless it were diseased or injured. Such may have been the case here, but the evidence was not found. Whether or no, the vitality of the bird seems to have been very remarkable.—E. GORDON ALEXANDER, *Fayette, Mo.*

**A Mating Performance of The Least Tern.—**On May 27, 1921, I was puzzled by the behavior of some Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*) at Carpinteria Beach, Santa Barbara Co., Calif., which were feeding small fish to other Terns apparently full grown. On May 31, at the mouth of the Ventura River, Ventura Co., Calif., I had an opportunity to observe the performance again at close range. It was evidently a mating performance. There were four or five pair playing about an estuary, pursuing each other and screaming. Occasionally one bird would bring up a small fish and then be joined by, or join, another bird, and after some aerial skirmishing and much screaming, both birds would alight on the