

## CORRESPONDENCE

Freeport, Maine,  
October 3, 1928.

Mr. Charles B. Floyd, Secretary, Northeastern Bird-Banding Association:

We were unfortunate this year in not having time to do as much banding as we hoped to do, for Labrador with its thousands of islands offers a wonderful opportunity for good work in this line. Given time, one could easily band a thousand birds such as the Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Razor-billed Auk, Puffin, Black Guillemot, and Murre, both *Uria troille troille* and *Uria lomvia lomvia*.

These are the birds on the Labrador which are most easily banded, and which we did band. There are innumerable Eider Ducks, but a man must be "Johnny on the spot," as you know, to band the young. Once dry and they are away for a pool on the island or for the sea.

To me the big thing of interest in the bird line on the Labrador is to find the nesting place of the three Scoters, the American, White-winged, and Surf, neither one of which is reported as breeding on the Labrador, yet they outnumber all other birds on the coast. I am surprised that I have found no native as yet who has ever found a nest!

I am anxiously looking forward to next year when I shall have more time to band, to study, and to settle definitely the status of so-called facts in ornithology which I feel should be accepted at least a bit reluctantly.

Very truly yours,  
DONALD B. McMILLAN.

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*To the Editors of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association:*

On the 15th of July, 1928, in the afternoon I started from Oak Bluffs for the Gull and Tern colony at Muskeget Island, which has an area of approximately five hundred acres. This island is about seventeen miles east of Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, and is a trip of two hours and a half by cat-boat, using both power and sail. The island is low, composed of sand and covered in part by small sand-dunes. The whole island above high water mark is covered with beach-grass and ivy, with the exception of the wide border of marsh on the southwest side. But few people live here, perhaps a dozen in summer and about half that in winter.

The few fishing-shacks and the old life-saving station are located close to the high-tide mark. All the remaining area is used as a breeding-ground for Gulls and Terns.

During the past few years the Laughing Gulls and Herring Gulls have been rapidly enlarging their breeding-grounds and driving the Common Terns to more restricted areas. The Roseate Terns seem to get along with the Laughing Gulls in friendly fashion, as I found on my yearly trips, as well as on this occasion, the birds nesting and rearing their young on the same area.

I reached the island near sundown, and, after putting our baggage and stores into the camp hired for the purpose, we wandered over a part of the island to size up the situation and band a few birds. The next morning (Monday) we borrowed a boat and visited a small island (belonging to Muskeget) where most of the Herring Gulls breed. A very heavy fog swept the island all day. On our return at night the tide was low, which necessitated hauling the boat by hand quite a bit of the way. We saw eleven Black Ducks feeding, forty-eight Knots (Red-breasted Sandpipers) feeding, and several flocks of from five to nine flying.

The next day dawned clear and warm, and a long day was spent in catching and banding Laughing Gulls with an occasional Tern for variety. I also made and erected a rude blind to be used for photographic purposes.<sup>1</sup>

The next day was spent in banding Laughing Gulls and Terns, taking pictures, and visiting a small sand island where a few more Herring Gulls were breeding. By this time we were feeling the very unpleasant effects of poison ivy. My young assistant, who, in his eagerness to qualify as such, stated that he was never poisoned by ivy, got a bad case.

The colony of Laughing Gulls is growing very rapidly, and the island is one of the most interesting places in the State, from the bird-lover's viewpoint at least. The colony of Herring Gulls is also showing a marked increase over last year.

While we were banding the Herring Gulls, very few of them moved from the spot where they felt themselves to be hiding, even though all but the head was exposed. All that was necessary was to pull out a leg, place the band and look for another bird.

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<sup>1</sup>An enlarged photograph of two adult Laughing Gulls is shown on the cover of this number of the *Bulletin*.

In banding the Laughing Gulls (no laughing matter) far different tactics had to be followed. These young birds were very clever in hiding. Paths extending through and under the dense ivy cover afforded the young a retreat which was very secure. I am sure in many cases the young ran at too near approach, and as these covered paths were very numerous and seemed to go in every direction, and had innumerable side runs, one can imagine the difficulty experienced in trying to band a large number in a short time.

At all hours, daytime or late at night, their clamor could be heard even inside the camp. These Gulls seemed to lose much of their fear in a short time and settled close by on the ground all around. Only those whose young were close at hand hovered overhead. It was a very pretty sight to see hundreds of these beautiful birds all about, many within twenty-five yards sitting on the ground. As one walked along, those in front arose as a cloud and settled on the ground again behind you.

One of the very interesting sights arises from the presence of a narrow little pond of fresh water extending perhaps fifty yards in a southwest to northeast line and about fifty feet in width. A continual stream of birds dipped their bills in the water for a drink while on the wing. The wind was on this particular occasion southwest, and the birds entered at the northeast end and continued out the southwest end, repeating the process if not satisfied. This continual procession made a very pretty picture and I felt as I watched that we were very fortunate to have this little fresh pond, thus separated as it is by a few feet of sand from the Atlantic.

With the protection that this island is now getting, and the complete absence of cats, the growth of the colony is assured.

I enclose the record of birds banded on the trip:

Herring Gulls ( <i>Larus argentatus</i> ) .....	143
Laughing Gulls ( <i>Larus atricilla</i> ) .....	404
Common Terns ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ) .....	41
Roseate Terns ( <i>Sterna dougalli</i> ) .....	24
Total .....	612

ALLAN KENISTON.

Martha's Vineyard Reservation, Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts.  
August 6, 1928.

*To the Editors of the Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association:*

The item in the July *Bulletin* (1928) on "Another Tree Sparrow Record of Importance" recalled to my mind the story of my Tree Sparrow No. 26978. This bird was banded by me here at Groton on February 25, 1923, repeated on March 9th, and was found dead by H. L. Spinney at Phippsburg, Maine, on April 7, 1926. As I did little banding here during the winters following 1923, it is not improbable that No. 26978 may have returned during the next three winters to its wintering-ground of 1923 without my being aware of it. Phippsburg, as you probably know, is on the coast a short distance beyond Portland.

The note on "Preponderance of Male Chewinks" (in the same number) suggested my looking up my records of banding this species at Summerville, South Carolina. I find that in 1926 I banded thirteen males and five females, in 1927 six males and seven females, and in 1928 twenty-three males and twelve females. Thus in the three winter seasons, forty-two males and twenty-five females were banded. While the taking of more males may have been a coincidence, the figures indicate the possibility of a preponderance of that sex during the past three years.

WILLIAM P. WHARTON.

Fiveoaks Farm, Groton, Massachusetts, August 11, 1928.