

obvious major divisions of the data which may be obtained by large-scale studies of this type. The invigorating influence by which amateur ornithology may be thus affected is more intangible, but nevertheless almost as desirable.

A PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANS
FOR A COÖPERATIVE FIELD STUDY
OF THE HERRING GULL

By JOSEPH J. HICKEY and ROBERT P. ALLEN

No clearer index to the alert interest of *Bird-Banding* in cooperative field ornithology can be found than in the immediate response of the Editor to the preceding article. As a direct result of the Editor's vigorous efforts, leading banders in the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association have whole-heartedly agreed to band several thousand Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) with celluloid bands during the next three months. Mr. F. C. Lincoln of the Bureau of Biological Survey has promised to support the program with sufficient bands. In addition, a large number of migration watchers have enthusiastically offered to carry out the study in their field work, by making sight-recoveries. Such a unanimity of effort concentrated upon a single species will unquestionably produce many interesting results.

Responsibility for the banding work in New England has been assumed by a committee comprising Messrs. R. J. Eaton and Benjamin Shreve, with Professor A. O. Gross acting as chairman. Dr. H. F. Lewis, Chief Migration Officer for the Dominion of Canada, will band a colony on the north side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and with his assistance plans are being made to band several other Canadian colonies. It is expected that one or more colonies in the Great Lakes region will also be included.

The work will, of course, be centered upon fledglings. Birds will be given three bands: the regular aluminum one and two celluloid ones. The latter will be of only two colors, red and green. In meeting such birds in the field, observers will check the *exact* position of all three bands and note at the same time whether the bands are upon the right or left legs or both. This marking scheme will enable one to determine the colony as well as the year in which the bird was banded. All the fledglings at each colony will thus receive the same celluloid-aluminum band combination. In New Brunswick, where Professor Gross will make a determined attempt to trap adult birds, adults will receive a combination different from the fledglings. Thus the *individual* identity of the Herring Gulls will be sacrificed to a simple formula which will provide the essential data needed and exact records on longevity will remain possible.

A four or five year banding program is contemplated. Sight-recoveries will furnish much data of scientific interest, and sight-returns secured by the banders at the various colonies in subsequent years will contribute not a little to our knowledge of these birds. In order that the bands may be easily recognizable, the celluloid bands will be one-half inch wide. Banding operations will be carried on possibly at a maximum of twelve stations, but at this writing the exact number has not been determined.

The task of coördinating the work of migration watchers has been undertaken by the Field Work Committee of the Linnaean Society (Address Room 410, 1775 Broadway, New York City), to whom all inquiries regarding this project may be addressed. Should the Biological Survey undertake control measures on Gull colonies this year, it will be especially important that data be gathered on unmarked as well as marked birds. Coöperators are asked to send in monthly reports, giving as nearly as possible: (1) the exact number of non-breeding birds in their locality; (2) dates of the first apparent migrants; (3) bi-weekly variation in the numbers of transients. Whenever marked birds are seen, it will be well to report as to these birds' companions. Were the marked individuals alone? Or were they with unmarked birds?

Experienced observers who are familiar with the moults of the Herring Gull should report the ratio of different plumages occurring in flocks. In February 1936, of 162 birds sampled thus by R. G. Kuerzi and J. J. Hickey, 29 per cent were first-year birds, 15.4 per cent were second-year, 3 per cent were third-year, and 50.6 per cent were adults. How do these percentages vary from month to month and from one locality to another? A good deal of the data on marked birds will derive its value from locality and date alone; but the counts on unmarked birds, if carefully made, will add much value to the study. We would appreciate such data for the interesting negative importance it will undoubtedly possess.

It need scarcely be pointed out that random marking by observers using colored bands and not in touch with the central banding committee would tend to destroy such a study as this. The number of colonies has been deliberately limited to avoid complication in obtaining reliable sight-recoveries. Additional instructions for observers in the field will be published from time to time in the pages of *Bird-Banding*, and news items will also appear in *Bird-Lore*.