

LAUGHING GULL BAND RECOVERIES FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

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Although many studies of band recoveries have been made for Herring Gulls, *Larus argentatus* (Smith, 1959; Paynter, 1966; Southern, 1968; Kadlec and Drury, 1968; and others), and Ring-billed Gulls, *L. delawarensis* (Ludwig, 1943; Ludwig, 1967; Southern, 1967; Vermeer, 1970; and others), no similar studies on Laughing Gulls (*L. atricilla*) exist. Likewise, with few exceptions such as Van Velzen's study in 1971 on Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*), few banding analyses have been made on South Carolina Laridae. In a study on gull ecology related to the bird-aircraft strike hazard at Charleston Air Force Base (Forsythe, 1972), I reviewed band records for all Laughing Gulls banded in or recovered from South Carolina. These data lend information on the distribution and movements of Laughing Gulls along the Atlantic Coast as well as for South Carolina.

METHODS

All recoveries of Laughing Gulls banded in or recovered in South Carolina from 1932 to 1970 were compiled by personnel of the Bird Banding Laboratory, Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel, Maryland. In the assessment of recovery rates of Laughing Gulls, the number of individuals banded along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts was also tabulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that 24 Laughing Gulls from five states were recovered in South Carolina, with 15 of the recoveries from New Jersey. During the period 1955-1970, about 22,600 Laughing Gulls were banded in New Jersey; this number was exceeded only by the 38,000 banded in Virginia. Most birds were recovered in South Carolina during spring and fall migration with peak numbers in October and November, although two recoveries in June and one in December were found. The peak numbers in October-November were similar to observations on numbers of migrating Laughing Gulls in the Charleston area (Forsythe, 1972). As would be expected for this species, all reports were from coastal locations, chiefly Charleston and Beaufort counties. This may reflect their actual distribution as well as the fact that most birders and banders were located in these areas. A recovery rate of 1 or 2 per cent was found for birds banded in most states and recovered in South Carolina. An exception was the 8 per cent recovery rate for North Carolina birds. This may have been because of the proximity of the two states and the accessibility of South Carolina beaches.

TABLE 1. Origin of Banded Laughing Gulls Recovered in South Carolina, 1932-1970.

Banding location	Month recovered in South Carolina							Total recovered in South Carolina
	June	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Mar.	
Massachusetts					1			1
New Jersey	1	1	1	7	4	1		15
Maryland				2			1	3
Virginia			1	1	1			3
North Carolina	1			1				2
Totals	2	1	2	11	6	1	1	24

TABLE 2. Recoveries of Laughing Gulls banded in South Carolina, 1939-1970

Banding location	Recovery date			Total recovered
	Aug.-Oct.	Dec.-Feb.	May-July	
Virginia	1			1
North Carolina	1			1
South Carolina	1			1
Florida		5	2	7
Honduras		1		1
Colombia		2		2
Nicaragua		1		1
Panama	1		1	2
Mexico		2		2
Totals	4	11	3	18

The majority of birds banded in South Carolina were recovered during the winter in Florida, Central, and South America (Table 2). Most Florida birds were reported from the Gulf Coast side of the peninsula. Some northward post-breeding movements occurred since two birds-of-the-year were recovered from Virginia and North Carolina in September and October (Table 2).

Thirty individuals were less than one year old when recovered and of these most were less than six months old. Six birds were between one and two years old and one was four and one-half years old. Most birds were either dead, sick, or injured when found, and entanglement in fishing equipment was the most common means by which birds were obtained. Two individuals were shot.

SUMMARY

Between 1932 and 1970, 24 Laughing Gulls from five middle Atlantic and Northeastern states were recovered in South Carolina. Most of them were from New Jersey. The majority of recoveries were during fall migration. Eighteen birds banded in South Carolina were recovered from 1932-1970, and most birds were recovered in Florida, Central, and South America during winter.

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