
Recoveries of Herring Gulls banded at Cape Ann, Massachusetts

Ralph W. Dexter

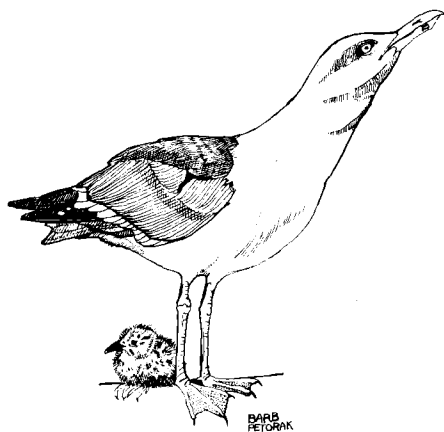
I. Introduction and methods

The Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) has been a breeding bird at Cape Ann, Mass., since 1926, and has nested widely in the area since 1938 (Dexter 1959, 1976). Between 1958-65 we banded 1,384 nestlings and chicks of the Herring Gull on eight islands surrounding Cape Ann.

Visits were made annually at about the time the nestlings were nearly full grown and fledged, but not able to fly. Adult birds were not captured. From a few months after banding until the end of 1974, recoveries were received from the Office of Migratory Bird Management. Most of the recoveries were made by people who found dead birds and submitted the band number to the Bird Banding Laboratory. Some, however, were reported by trained ornithologists who recaptured and released the birds or were skilled in reading band numbers on living birds with the aid of a spotting scope.

II. Results and discussion

To date, 126 recovery records involving 104 (7.5%) birds have been reported. Ten birds were reported from 2-5 times and 66 records were sight reports. Five birds were trapped and released; the remainder were found dead. An analysis is given here of the results, and Figure 1 indicates the localities from which recoveries were made.



The number banded each year, the number of recoveries from that year-class, and the number of recoveries made each year are shown in Table 1.

Harris (1964) found that the majority of recoveries of Herring Gulls he banded as young birds were made during the first year of life and particularly in the first few months after fledging. Likewise, the first-year gulls in this study formed the largest year-class of recoveries (36.4%) with the longest distance (1,307 miles) and largest average distance (159.6 miles) from the banding site. Recoveries were made in all months of the year, except February, but 65% of the recoveries were obtained between June—August.

Because of corrosion and abrasion, Herring Gulls are known to lose their bands in time. This was pointed out by Poulting (1954) and Harris (1964). Kadlec and Drury (1968) suggest that "The rate of band loss is initially low, increases rapidly from age 4 to 6, and then remains relatively constant," and the following year (1969) they estimated that 45% of the bands were lost by the end of the third year. Undoubtedly, band loss explains the small number of recoveries after the sixth year, obtained in this study.

Ten birds had multiple recovery records (4, two times; 2, three times; 1, four times; 3, five times). The greatest number of returns occurred in 1963. The oldest recoveries were as follows:

- 12 yrs., 3 mo.—Fairfield Beach, Connecticut
- 10 yrs., 1 mo.—Parker River (Rowley), Massachusetts
- 11 yrs., 3 mo.—Wakefield, Massachusetts
- 10 yrs., 2 mo.—Gloucester, Massachusetts
- 9 yrs., 1 mo.—Chatham, Massachusetts
- 8 yrs., 0 mo.—Portland, Maine

Marshall (1947) found only 1% of his banded Herring Gulls to survive for ten years. His oldest record was 17 years. However, Ludwig (1963) obtained a return after 22 years. It is generally believed that

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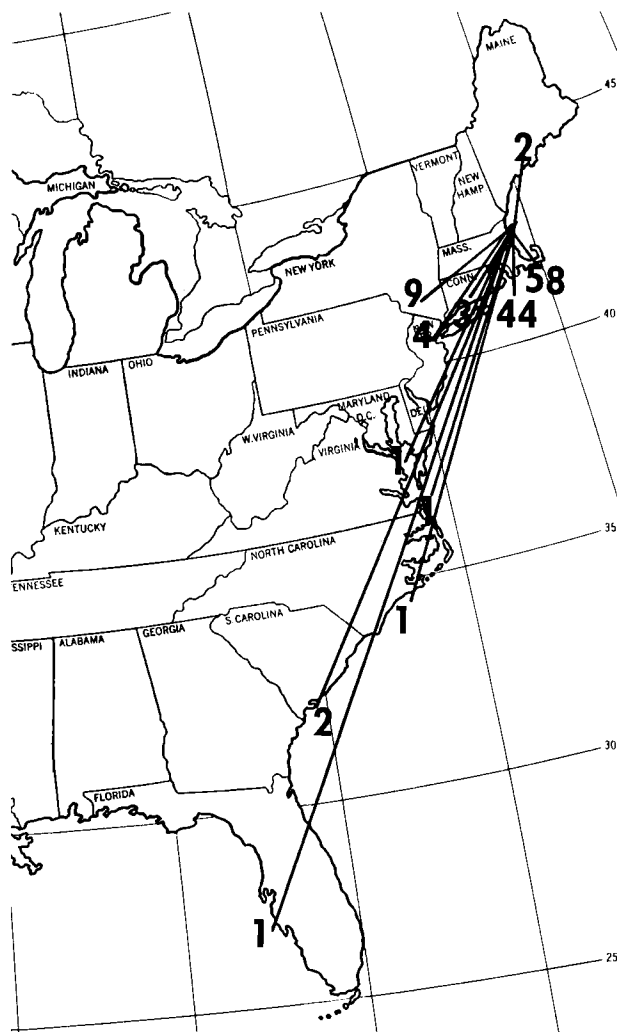


Figure 1. Areas of recovery of Herring Gulls banded as nestlings or chicks at Cape Ann, MA, 1958-65.

Table 1. Total number of Herring Gulls banded each year, the number of recoveries from each year-class, and the number of recoveries obtained each year.

Year	Number Banded	Year-class Recoveries	Recoveries that year
58	143	3	1
59			
60	174	12	2
61	467	54	9
62	223	28	13
63	264	24	38
64	58	4	27
65	55	1	15
66			1
67			7
68			4
69			2
70			3
71			
72			1
73			2
74			1

Herring Gulls may live to be at least 25 years of age.

A. Local recoveries

There have been 19 local recoveries ranging up to 11 miles from the banding site (average distance 3.2 miles). Six birds were recovered in less than one month (range 2-25 days; average 17). Another six birds were recovered from 1-5 years (range 13-59 months; average 32). Seven birds were recovered from 6-10 years (range 71-122 months; average 77).

B. Recoveries from distant points

The recoveries off Cape Ann numbered 107, with a range of 13—1,307 miles (average distance 130 miles). The time interval ranged from 1—147 months or, up to 12.3 years (average 28.2 months or, 2.4 years). The greatest distance was the record from Ft. Meyers, Florida (1,307 miles), and recoveries were made from all states, except Georgia and Delaware, from Florida to Maine.

Recoveries from the greatest distances, with the time interval, are shown below:

Ft. Myers, Florida. 1,307 miles; 10 months

Charleston, S.C. 867 miles; 9 months

Myrtle Beach, S.C. 796 miles; 3 months

Holden Beach (Supply) N.C. 740 miles; 3 months

Only two recoveries were made north of the banding location—Boothbay and Portland, Maine. Eaton (1933) banded Herring Gulls on the coast of Massachusetts, just south of Cape Ann, and did not receive any recoveries north of Cape Ann. Gross (1940) received recoveries largely south of his banding site on Kent Island, and Parks (1959) found only eight Herring Gulls recovered north of the banding site on the coast of Maine. Dennis and Pepper (1962), who banded on the islands on the south shore of Massachusetts, recovered less than 6% of the recoveries north of the banding site. Schreiber (1968) also recovered only two Herring Gulls from Maine, which he had banded on Cape Ann. Evidence from published papers and from this report indicate that Herring Gulls move primarily southward from the site of origin, passing up and down the coast, but seldom going northward beyond the point of origin.

III. Summary

Between 1958—65, a total of 1,384 nestlings and chicks of the Herring Gull were banded on eight islands at Cape Ann, Massachusetts, from which 126 recovery records have been made. Ten birds were reported 2—5 times from a total of 66 sight records. Five were trapped and released. Most recoveries were made in the summer months; the

greatest number occurred in 1963. The oldest recoveries ranged from 8 to over 12 years of age. Local recoveries (19) were made within 11 miles over 10 year's time. Recoveries beyond Cape Ann (107) ranged from 13—1,307 miles, made over more than 12 years, including nearly all states between Florida and Massachusetts. Only two recoveries (Boothbay and Portland, Maine) were made north of the banding site. Published accounts and this study indicate that Herring Gulls move up and down the Atlantic Coast, but they seldom go north of their point of origin. A map indicates areas of recovery.

Acknowledgments

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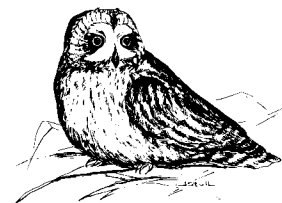
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Department of Biological Sciences, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio 44242

An inexpensive method for capturing Short-eared Owls

Richard H. Kahn & Brian A. Millsap



As part of a study concerning winter roost site selection of Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) in Larimer County, Colorado, we developed an inexpensive and simple technique for capturing owls without the aid of mist nets or lures.

In our observation of Short-eared Owls in marsh and field roosts, we found that—when flushed from their roosts during the middle of the day—the owls consistently flew to nearby posts and alighted there until the intruders left the immediate area.

We then developed a type of baitless Bal Chatri trap for placing on fence posts. This consisted of a piece of hardware cloth cut to fit the top of the post. The hardware cloth was noosed with monofilament fishing line and tied to a drag. The

drag, a piece of wood, was placed at the base of the post in the grass. The trap was attached to the post by bending the corners so that it was flush with the post and so that there was no overlap on the sides. Both the hardware cloth and the nooses were painted black. Cost of this trap was ten dollars for one dozen traps.

From 19 January to 15 February 1978, four Short-eared Owls were taken in eight trapping hours, using this method. In addition, six owls landed on traps but did not get noosed.

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Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO 80522