

## BIRD BANDING DEPARTMENT

Under the Direction of Wm. I. Lyon, Waukegan, Ill.

GULL AND TURN BANDING ON THE GREAT LAKES  
DURING THE SEASON OF 1924

BY R. M. STRONG

The genial and enterprising secretary of the Inland Bird Banding Association not only enlisted me in his banding campaign, but he has prevailed upon me to write this report and what has been done with Gulls and Terns about the Great Lakes, the past season. He has also furnished me with most of the data.

Doubtless all of us have wondered at times whether Gull and Tern banding would yield any results. It is a common experience to be asked how we can hope to get any returns. Gulls and Terns are common enough, but they do not enter the traps of bird banders, and they are not game birds. The answer is found in the remarkable results already obtained in Europe.

A recent paper by Thomson<sup>1</sup> contains some exceedingly interesting records, with reference to various publications of results. The recoveries of two British banding projects for both the Herring Gull and the Lesser Black-backed Gull amounted to 4%. Thomson mentions the still more successful Danish work published by Skovgaard.<sup>2</sup> During the period from 1917 to 1921, 1,177 nestling Herring Gulls were "marked" in a colony on the island of Fario near Esbjerg, at the south-western corner of Denmark. One hundred of these were recovered "in the first year of life." Dispersal took place northwards and southward "in approximately equal degree." Many other recoveries of Gulls banded in Europe are mentioned by Thomson.

An attempt to band gulls was made by Mr. M. J. Magee of Sault Ste Marie, Michigan, in June, 1922, but he succeeded with just one young Herring Gull, though he banded a good many other birds that season. Bands were placed on eighty Herring Gulls and forty-four Terns by Mr. W. S. McCrea, in the northern part of Lake Michigan at the Beaver Islands that year.

Better results were obtained in 1923<sup>3</sup> when over 450 Herring Gulls, 600 Common Terns and 200 Caspian Terns were banded in Lake Huron and northern Lake Michigan.

An appeal for information and for volunteers to place bands appeared in the December, 1923, number of the Wilson Bulletin. The number for the following March contained another call for helpers. There was also a report of information obtained, and experiences were given. At the same time, the secretary of the Association sent out much propaganda in letters.

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, A. S. The Migration of the Herring-Gull and Lesser Black-Backed Gull: Results of the Marking Method. *British Birds*. Vol. XVIII, No. 2, July 1, pp. 34-44.

<sup>2</sup> Skovgaard, 1921. *Maerkede Havmaager*. *Danske. Fregle*. II. p. 65. Reference cited from Thomson.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson Bulletin, Sept., 1923.

As the result of such zealous efforts and the policy of the Biological Survey in prompting a Gull and Tern banding campaign during the 1924 breeding season, a much greater number of birds were banded. This success was obtained in spite of unusually bad weather which greatly curtailed visits to the remote places where the colonies breed.

The following table gives the 1924 results as collected to date. These figures would have been much larger in a normal season. My own trip occurred during a week of mostly stormy weather.

	Herring Gull		Caspian Tern	Common Tern
	Gull	Tern		
Lincoln and McCrea .....	300	500		144
W. E. Hastings .....				1156
W. B. Purdy .....				100
Rev. Geo. Luther .....	6			24
Dr. R. M. Strong .....	33			30
H. E. Wilson .....	150	126		
W. I. Lyon .....	383			378
M. J. Magee .....	1			
	—	—	—	—
	873	626		1832

In spite of a backward spring, the Herring Gulls began to breed early. Hatching of eggs was reported at Big Sister Island in Green Bay the last week of May. I found the breeding not at all delayed when I visited Gull Island in Lake Huron, July 11. Many young were flying, and I found only a few nests with eggs or newly-hatched young. It is my judgment that banding of young Herring Gulls can be best done during the last half of June, though the first half of July is good, especially if the nesting has been disturbed by storms or poachers. Some work can usually be done during the third week of July, but the colonies I have visited in the fourth week were deserted.

The Tern nesting season is later. I was too early on July 10th for the Common Terns at Black River Island about 25 miles south of Alpena in Lake Huron. This small island had hundreds of nests with eggs but only here and there had hatching taken place. I found no young that I thought were more than a week old. During several hours search, I found thirty that I ventured to band. Some of these were probably not more than two days old. The latter part of July would have been a better time. It is also the time for Caspian Terns.

Conditions for banding vary greatly at different colonies. When there is much underbrush and dense vegetation, it is often hard to find the young birds, especially if the island is large for the number of birds breeding. The most favorable place for banding I have ever seen is Gravel Island in Lake Michigan, where the gull population is dense and the vegetation too slight to afford hiding places.

Some of the breeding places are disappearing. Captain Ellsworth informed me this summer that the rock composing Gull Island in Lake Superior, west of Marquette, has been removed. Mr. Lyon found that Jack Island, one of the Strawberry group in Green Bay, which has had a fine Herring Gull colony, is to be cleared for a vacation home. Little

Strawberry Island in Green Bay was used by campers this summer, and we found a house occupied by fishermen on Gull Island in Lake Huron. This house certainly does not help the prospects of the Gull colony.

Both Mr. Lyon and myself found Band No. 7 too large for the Herring Gull, even when of adult size. No. 6 is plenty large for this bird.

Thomson mentions the banding of 86 Herring Gulls caught at night on the seashore by approaching them with bright lamps. I found a market basket especially convenient. One or two young gulls could be placed in this, and they would not try to escape while I was getting out pliers, notebook, and bands. It is important, in my judgment, that the birds be released where found because of the tendency of adults to attack young birds on the wrong range.

"The Survey" of August, 1924, reports that two returns of Caspian Terns have been reported from Columbia, South Africa.

It also states that Mr. Henderson was joining the Biological Survey party, which was banding wild fowl at the head of Hoover Bay, south of the Yukon Delta.

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#### SELECTION OF A TRAPPING STATION

Selecting a point at which to set a new trap should be very carefully considered. The study of the successful trapping situations shows that most of them have attractive approaches such as trees or shrubbery, preferably both. The tree with a dead top makes an excellent attraction. In the case of bushes it has been found very advisable to strip the leaves from some of the upper and outer branches so that there will be places for the birds to alight as they approach the trap. If no such place is available you can increase your trapping results by placing a dead sapling in the middle of the bush or close to the trap. In the case of a trap at the base of some bushes, birds flying in the opposite direction might never see it, but if there is a convenient perching place they are tempted to alight and in such case have a good view of the trap and the bait.

In setting traps upon the ground, one should select a place that has a trifle slope, for drainage, especially if you live in the snow and ice district, as during the winter your traps are likely to become frozen in. Keep the bait fresh and the ground clean. These are the main points in attracting and trapping birds.

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#### 1925 GULL AND TERN CAMPAIGN

The Inland Association is starting next year's campaign, and we ask all those who gained any information during the past season about the species of birds to be found and their exact locations to aid in the work by sending in the details, thus helping to make a greater success next year.

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This department needs an account of your unusual experiences, and we will appreciate any contributions.