

## HERRING GULL COLORING PROJECT

In 1962, for the second year, the Massachusetts Audubon Society will run a project of coloring and banding Herring Gulls along the New England coast in order to describe the details of the gull population, its growth and its movements. Under contract with the Branch of Research of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and using funds from the Federal Aviation Agency, this study will be carried on by William Drury and Anthony Keith of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Robert Woodruff of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and Peter Mott of the Middlesex School at Concord, Mass., supervising teams totalling 13 college students.

The teams will capture, band and color as many adult gulls as possible at breeding colonies from Cape Ann to Boston Harbor, and in Narragansett Bay. The birds will be dyed with colors designed to attract attention, such as orange, purple, green and blue-violet -- colors not usually associated with gulls. Four students will make the rounds of dumps, piggeries and fish piers, looking for colored gulls, but the reports of interested, if startled, public, are equally important as a source of information.

The main purposes of the study are to learn what food the gulls eat, and how far they go for it; what are the gull metropolitan units, and what are the channels of their commuting traffic; what is the domain of each community of gulls, and how far they go on their winter holidays. Like life insurance agents, the investigators are interested in percentages of age groups and mortality rates. They hope to learn why gulls in some areas continue to double their population every five years, although others maintain a steady number.

The evidence gathered in 1961 strongly suggests that gulls around coastal cities will continue to double their numbers every few years, unless we clean up human pollution in our coastal regions; the need is for more data on gull numbers, movements, and food, to prove this to the authorities, and to answer those who, because gull strikes continue at airports, may set off a campaign to eradicate anything that flies. They will gather more evidence to support or deny the conclusion that the problem of strikes at Logan Airport in Boston can be solved best by cleaning up the garbage dumps and fish piers surrounding it, thus making the area much less attractive to gulls than it now is.

Any reports you can send us of censuses of gulls, especially of colored gulls, will help us to document population movements, and will excellently serve the purpose for which we all support Audubon societies.

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