

PURPLE GALLINULE BANDED IN NEW JERSEY

By Betty Knorr

On May 21, 1964, a boy was walking with his dog in Kawameeh Swamp near his home in Union, New Jersey. Along the Elizabeth River he noticed an unusual bird that appeared to be injured, and his dog retrieved the bird.

The boy took the bird home and later decided to take it to the local pet shop and feed store. On a routine trip to this feed store my husband was startled to see a gorgeous Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*) in a cage!

The proprietor, whom we have known for many years, thought the bird was some kind of an exotic bird which had escaped from captivity. He was very surprised when we told him that the bird was actually a Purple Gallinule and an extremely rare wild bird to be found in New Jersey.

Realizing that it was a protected wild bird which he could not legally keep, he turned the gallinule over to us for banding and release.

The left leg of the bird had been broken at the femur, and by the time we got the bird, the break had mended. Unfortunately, it did not mend properly and the leg was a bit crooked, causing the bird to walk with an awkward gait.

Other than the lame leg, the gallinule was in excellent condition. The bird was in extremely fine plumage, could fly perfectly, perch easily, and climb fairly well and thoroughly enjoyed bathing and swimming in the bath tub. During the time I kept the bird for observation he relished a diet of cracked corn, mealworms, mixed bird seed, grit, and celery tops.

Prior to releasing this gallinule we took a number of colored photographs and motion pictures of the bird. The wing chord measured 179 mm. and the bird weighed 189.1 grams with no visible signs of fat present.

I decided to release the bird in Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which is located approximately 15 miles west of where the gallinule was found. This refuge contains the typical habitat required by this species and also is a protected sanctuary.

On June 14th we released the gallinule in Great Swamp, and the bird appeared to be right at home, swimming about and climbing through the vegetation, until he gradually disappeared from view. This gallinule has since been observed in the area by a number of bird watchers on various occasions.

58 Steamboat Landing Road, South Amboy, New Jersey



(See preceding page)

PROOF THAT HERRING GULLS ARE CANNIBALS
By Grace Coit Meleney

No one can walk over the nesting grounds of herring gulls at nesting time without being impressed with the numbers of dead young gulls nor with the numbers of still living ones whose heads have been pecked at, presumably by the adult gulls.

In July of this year at Lobsterville in the western end of the island of Martha's Vineyard, I seemed to see many dead young gulls with the entrails missing or one leg gone. However, one sight was past belief. When I had completed banding a young gull, 14 to 15 inches long, I noticed the webbed foot with toenails of a similar sized young gull protruding from the banded gull's bill. With my pliers, I pulled and pulled and pulled and finally extricated a whole leg. The fleshy thigh must have been way down in the young gull's stomach. I wonder how long it would have taken to digest that meal!

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