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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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