

ROYAL TERN RECOVERY FROM TIGER SHARK
 (or From Hand to Mouth)
 By Willet T. Van Velzen

When the bird flies from the hand the bander often wonders if it will ever be heard from again. This is especially true when one bands young of colonial species, the adults of which are seldom handled. Such is the case with the Royal Terns (Thalasseus maximus) I have banded in colonies along the eastern coast. In mid-April of last year, however, we received a letter from Katherine von Schmidt of the Cape Haze Marine Laboratory at Sarasota, Florida, dated 9 April 1965. Mrs. von Schmidt wrote:

"Enclosed are several feathers and what we assume to be a bird band taken from the stomach of a female Tiger Shark (Galeocerdo cuvieri), caught on 15 March 1965, in the Gulf of Mexico, several miles off of Sarasota, Florida. This shark was kept alive in our pens until today. She was found dying, so was killed and dissected. As far as we know, this shark did not eat during captivity and showed no interest in food put into the pen. It is possible that she could have eaten the bird before she was caught, as the stomachs of other sharks kept in captivity for several weeks, have yielded items which could not possibly have been eaten while in captivity. We would very much appreciate hearing....if feathers and band came from the same species... This band is the most intriguing non-edible item we have found in a shark's stomach."

Although quite discolored--and most odoriferous--the feathers were those of a Royal Tern and the band one that I had placed on a Royal Tern chick on Deveaux Bank near Charleston, S. C., on 13 June 1964. As the finding of the band was intriguing to them, no less was the recovery to me.

As an added note of interest, Mrs. von Schmidt wrote again early this year saying that on 27 January 1966 her daughter found an injured Royal Tern near the beach at Sarasota. This bird I had banded on Smith Island, Va., on 9 July 1965.

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