

## FIRST SIGHT-RECOVERIES OF MARKED HERRING GULLS

By J. J. HICKEY AND ROBERT P. ALLEN

BECAUSE the Herring Gull project is such a unique experiment in field coöperation, it seems necessary that migration watchers be given an early analysis of its operation. The measures by which these gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) were marked with celluloid bands have already been described in *Bird-Banding* (VIII: 73-5; 126; 173). More recently the McMillan expedition reports that it was unable to ring any birds in Labrador, thus setting the final figure of banded birds in 1937 at 6,140.

The red, blue and yellow colors which were used, are fairly conspicuous in the field. Most of the bands carried by the birds rest close down to the foot. Combinations are clearly read at from fifty to seventy-five yards, but this varies with the circumstances of the observation and with the magnifying power of one's binoculars. Birds following a fishing boat occasionally permit an observer to read quite accurately the order of colors without the aid of a glass, but under ordinary conditions the exact color of combinations cannot be clearly ascertained on birds in flight. Most of the aluminum bands bearing the customary inscription of the U. S. Biological Survey are so invisible in the field that their position can only be seen with great difficulty. These metal bands do not constitute an essential part of the color combinations used in 1937. They do, however, serve as a check on the possibility of bands slipping or breaking off.

The number of sight-recoveries accepted as bona fide by the Field Work Committee of the Linnæan Society of New York, numbers 135 at this writing, December 14th. These were reported by 29 persons, of which 71 per cent are known to be bird students. This latter group however, actually contributed more than 84 per cent of the recoveries recorded. It seems apparent that further assistance from laymen in this project will only be obtained by repeated releases of publicity to the press. This ideal can only be imperfectly achieved due to the amateur character of the project.

In the accompanying table No. 1 the writers have omitted the exact localities in which the sight-recoveries were made. The records all come from the coast, and the resultant picture, at least for New York, indicates the complicated movement of the gulls southward. St. Mary Islands lie on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Bonaventure lies on the south shore, and the Razades are in the St. Lawrence River, not far from the city of Quebec. Previous recoveries of birds banded only with the metal rings of the Survey have shown that the wintering grounds of these gulls tend to include Newfoundland and the maritime provinces rather

than the states to the south. The records of these birds on Long Island (N. Y.) comes therefore as something of a surprise.

TABLE NO. 1

The meanings of the exponents 1-5 added to the names of the coöperators are as follows: <sup>1</sup> Bird was shot, <sup>2</sup> Adult bird, <sup>3</sup> Bird was captured, <sup>4</sup> Same bird captured and released, <sup>5</sup> Dead bird.

St. Mary Islands, P. Q.	Razades Islands, P. Q.	Bonaventure Island, P. Q.
<b>NEWFOUNDLAND</b>		
	Sept. 8—E. Hann <sup>2</sup>	
<b>MAINE</b>	2-Oct. 27—C. D. Wallace	
<b>NEW YORK</b>		
Oct. 12—A. D. Cruickshank	Oct. 22—A. D. Cruickshank	Oct. 22—Cruickshank
	Oct. 30—H. Kraslow	
Nov. 11—Mr. & Mrs. Boerher	Nov. 11—Brigham, Herbert, Hickey	Nov. 11—Herbert, <sup>3</sup> Hickey
	2-Nov. 16—H. Kraslow	
	2-Nov. 20—H. Kraslow	
	Dec. 4—Allen, Painter, Flynn, Hickey	
2-Dec. 11—Kraslow, Jacobson, Painter, Shainin	Dec. 11—Kraslow, Jacobson, Painter, Shainin	
<b>Kent's Island, N. B.</b>	<b>Muscongus Bay, Me.</b>	<b>Heron Island, Me.</b>
<b>MAINE</b>		
6-Sept. 1—N. R. Pillsbury		Aug. —Cruickshank
4-Oct. 27—C. D. Wallace		Aug. —Cruickshank
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b>		
Nov. 4—E. M. Lailer		
Oct. 24—E. J. DaVerger		
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>		
Nov. 28—R. Batchelder		Nov. 13—C. W. Buchheister
<b>RHODE ISLAND</b>		
Nov. 20—H. N. Hobbs		
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>		
Nov. 1—C. P. Smith		Oct. 22—C. P. Smith
4-Nov. 5—C. P. Smith		
<b>NEW YORK</b>		
Oct. 3—A. A. McDonald	Sept. 26—J. Peachman <sup>5</sup>	
Oct. 7—J. F. Kieran	Oct. 8—J. F. Kieran	
Oct. 10—R. Christensen	3-Oct. 10—Cruickshank	2-Oct. 10—R. Christensen
2-Oct. 17—V. Shainin, Allen, Cruickshank	2-Oct. 12—Cruickshank	Oct. 16—C. Hastava
Oct. 22—Cruickshank	Oct. 17—Allen, Cruickshank	
2-Oct. 23—H. Kraslow		
Oct. 30—H. Kraslow	Oct. 31—Allen, Cruickshank, Hickey	3-Oct. 30—H. Kraslow
Oct. 31—Cruickshank		Oct. 31—Cruickshank
Nov. 6—H. Kraslow		
Nov. 7—R. A. Herbert		
5-Nov. 11—Herbert, Hickey	Nov. 11—Herbert, Hickey	Nov. 11—Herbert, Hickey
2-Nov. 16—H. Kraslow		
3-Nov. 20—H. Kraslow		
Nov. 21—J. J. Hickey	Nov. 21—J. J. Hickey	Nov. 21—H. Kraslow <sup>1</sup>
Nov. 22—H. Kraslow	Nov. 22—H. Kraslow	2-Nov. 26—Flynn, Kraslow
3-Dec. 4—Allen, Hickey		Dec. 4—Allen, Hickey
2-Dec. 5—Allyn, Brooks, Hickey, Woodbridge		
2-Dec. 11—J. J. Hickey		
5-Dec. 11—Kraslow, Jacobson, Painter, Shainin		Dec. 11—Kraslow, Jacobson, Painter, Shainin
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>		
Nov. 21—J. M. Cadbury	Sept. 26—J. M. Cadbury	
Nov. 21—J. M. Cadbury <sup>2</sup>	2-Nov. 21—J. M. Cadbury	
<b>Isles of Shoals, N. H.</b>	<b>Penikese Island, Mass.</b>	<b>Wicopeset Island, N. Y.</b>
<b>NOVA SCOTIA</b>		
Sept. 18—E. S. Fanning <sup>2</sup>		
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b>		
Aug. 20—R. Reid <sup>4</sup>		
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>		
Sept. 1-3—Smith, Speck <sup>4</sup>	Nov. (10?)—J. J. Fraser	
Sept. 7—E. Snow <sup>4</sup>		
Sept. 9—S. Parsi <sup>4</sup>		

NEW YORK

4-Sept. 12—Miss M. Kinney  
Oct. 8—J. F. Kieran  
Oct. 9—R. G. Kramer  
Oct. 10—Cruikshank  
Oct. 12—Cruikshank  
Nov. 16—H. Kraslow  
2-Nov. 20—H. Kraslow  
Nov. 26—Flynn, Kraslow

Oct. 7—J. F. Kieran

Oct. 15—C. Hastava  
2-Oct. 23—H. Kraslow  
Nov. 11—Herbert, Hickey  
Nov. 21—J. J. Hickey

3-Nov. 20—H. Kraslow  
Nov. 26—Flynn, Kraslow  
Dec. 4—J. J. Hickey

NEW JERSEY

Nov. 21—J. M. Cadbury

Sept. 26—J. M. Cadbury

MARYLAND

Aug. 24—E. F. Fadum<sup>5</sup>

These recoveries offer but a glimpse into the migratory movements of the Herring Gulls. Since over 65 per cent of the reports came from New York, it may be well to summarize the data from that area as follows:

TABLE NO. 2  
95 RECOVERIES IN THE REGION OF NEW YORK CITY  
(Colonies, reading from left to right, are arranged from north to south)

	St. Mary's	Razades	Bona-venture	Kent's	Muscogus	Heron	Shoals	Penikese	Wicopisset	
Sept. 1-30.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	4
Oct. 1-15.....	1	—	—	3	5	2	4	1	1	17
Oct. 16-31.....	—	2	1	7	2	6	—	—	1	19
Nov. 1-15.....	1	1	1	7	1	1	—	—	1	13
Nov. 16-30.....	—	4	—	7	3	1	4	2	1	22
Dec. 1-11.....	2	2	—	12	—	.3	—	1	—	20
	4	9	2	36	11	13	12	4	4	95

Just how may one deliberately set out to find banded gulls? The answer to this question may possibly vary from one locality to another. The writers' knowledge of daily habits of fall and winter gulls is confined largely to the vicinity of southern New York State. There the birds flock into great rafts near nightfall. The position of these roosts always varies according to winds, the birds endeavoring to find the most sheltered water in the bays. Diurnal concentrations occur at garbage dumps on the outskirts of the large cities where the gulls feed about forty-five minutes after sunrise. Feeding on the dumps is intermittent and is broken by long periods of resting on adjacent areas,—marsh, tidal flats, fields, rivers, piers, etc. These resting areas may make the observation of colored bands comparatively easy or utterly impossible. At the present time 55 per cent of the sight-recoveries come from garbage dumps, 4 per cent from the resting areas nearby, 13 per cent from fishing boats and piers, 4 per cent from beaches, 5 per cent from miscellaneous places and 16 per cent from places unknown to the committee.

One of the most fascinating aspects of migration watching this fall has been an endeavor to determine the ratio of banded to unbanded first-year gulls. During October and November, this ratio was usually from 1:50 to 1:100 on Long Island. If in some future year comparable observations can be obtained at a number of other points along the eastern flyway of this species, we may be able to secure a satisfactory index of the major part of the Herring Gull population.

## SUMMARY

1. Successful observation of colored band combinations on Herring Gulls varies with the power of binoculars and with local conditions.

2. Bird students have contributed 84 per cent of all sight recoveries (up to about December 12, 1937).

3. The migration of first-year Herring Gulls southward appears to be fairly complicated. Birds from the St. Lawrence River and Gulf, and the Bay of Fundy, reach Long Island and New York City shortly after the Maine Coast Gulls arrive. Recoveries are insufficient as yet to permit a complete analysis of these movements.

4. In the New York City region a majority of recoveries have been made on garbage dumps, and successful observation has depended on some knowledge of the habits of local gull flocks.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## GENERAL NOTES

**Some Detailed History of Herring Gull 37-652822.**—From the five hundred young Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) banded at the Isles of Shoals, New Hampshire, in July, 1937, one bird has already been identified several times by means of the colored bands.

This gull was raised as a campus pet at the Summer school of the University of New Hampshire at the Isles of Shoals. It was not confined at any time.

On August 28, 1937, this bird was first identified at Rye North Beach, New Hampshire near the place of banding. It was on the ground, where it was stretching its neck and calling, acting as though it was trying to swallow something but was unable to do so. The discoverer walked to the bird and was surprised in being allowed to pick it up. The bird's throat was stroked, in an effort to correct the trouble. The bird soon became quiet and stopped calling. It was then tossed into the air that it might fly away, but it rose only about twenty feet, making a circle, and alighted at the captor's feet. It was then taken out on some low rocks by the seashore, where it was left. Soon another gull swooped down near it, giving a call, and both flew away together.

At its next place of recovery, 37-652822 became well known. Here, in Ipswich Bay, Massachusetts, many fishermen learned to await its appearance, catching it easily when it alighted on their fishing-boats. The fishermen fed it sand-worms, sand-eels, fish-bait, and fish-refuse. It could be easily caught, and would take food from the hands of the mackerel fishermen readily and fearlessly. It remained at least through the 3d of September. It was also reported a mile and a half east of Plum Island.

This gull was next reported from Gloucester, Massachusetts, at Pavalion Beach. Its tameness was continued here, where, the last time heard from, it followed its captor about the beach for an hour or so, while he worked on his boat. When released on September 9th it still wore its conspicuous bands, two of red celluloid and a numbered aluminum band. No report has been received since the bird was last seen at Gloucester on the above date, when it was observed as it flew away.

At the Isles of Shoals 37-652822 began early in August to fly down to the ocean, coming back to the laboratory building at night, never leaving the immediate