

will eventually prove to be its death blow insofar as *city* life is concerned. But it is possible he may utilize his amazing adaptiveness to where he can successfully compete for a living with the birds of the woods and the fields, though I do not believe this, otherwise than in greatly decreased numbers, because the very boldness which so fits him for town life will militate against him, where he must gain so many, to him, unaccustomed enemies, while at the same time he will have been robbed of most of his safe roosting and nesting sites. In any case, the birds previously established, and ready to prove that possession is nine points of the law, and just as able as himself at gang offensive and defensive, will have little to fear from him. And right now is the time to begin getting the House Finches together, for hand-raising, teaching them that humankind are their friends, and generally preparing them for being freed, as soon as they are able to care for themselves, so that they may make themselves at home long before winter sets in. Of course they should also be provided, for at least a season or two, with winter shelter, food and water. But their demands in these lines could be met at little expense, and with little trouble, since here again they show points of similarity to the English Sparrow, stowing themselves warmly away, sparrow-wise, for first preference around street or outdoor building lighting fixtures, and against chimneys, or under house eaves, and so forth, as well as making acceptable grist of practically all that comes to their little mills.—BESSIE M. REID, *Port Arthur, Texas.*

---

## BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by W. I. Lyon

---

### BANDING GULLS AND TERNS IN LAKE MICHIGAN; 1924 AND 1925

BY FREDERICK C. LINCOLN

In the WILSON BULLETIN for March, 1924 (pp. 38-41), I presented under a similar title, an account of the banding work done at the Beaver Islands, in northern Lake Michigan, during the summers of 1922 and 1923, in co-operation with W. S. McCrea, of Chicago, who, with the help of Mrs. McCrea, carried on the initial activities there in 1922. Because of his continued interest in this work it was my privilege to continue banding operations at that point during the summers of 1924 and 1925.

Accompanied by Mrs. Lincoln, I arrived again at St. James on July 18, 1924, following two weeks work for the Bureau of Lighthouses at the Charity Islands in Saginaw Bay, Lake Huron, and at the lighthouse reservations in the Straits of Mackinac. We were cordially greeted by the McCreas and, taking advantage of calm weather, we made a trip that same afternoon to Mire Island. In 1923 this islet supported a colony of about 100 Herring Gulls, which in 1924 had grown to about 500. From subsequent observations a certain yearly fluctuation in the size of the colonies was evidently to be expected, for which I have no reason to offer, other than the idiosyncrasies of the birds, which cause them to abandon partially one island in favor of another that is seemingly not so well suited for their needs. This lack of consistency is reflected also in their migratory movements.

Despite the large number of adults present, only sixty-nine young were banded, the season apparently being early, since many young noted were already

flying. Stony Reef, a long narrow islet off Garden Island, we visited on the return trip and there we found a breeding colony of about 300 pairs of Common Terns. A few eggs had hatched and many chicks were found dead, probably from the cold and rain of the preceeding days.

Two days later we cruised east to Hat Island and there too found an increase in the number of gulls. As at Mire Island, many young were then on the wing. We banded 181 birds and then crossed over to Little Hat Island to examine the colony of Caspian Terns, which likewise was in a prosperous condition. Many eggs were still unhatched but we easily banded 135 young. Returning to this point on the next with a small net, we erected a small corral with a V-shaped

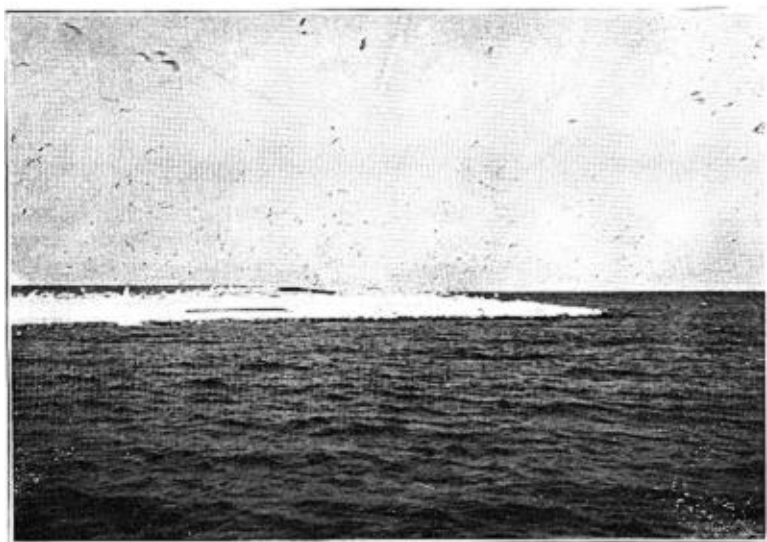


FIGURE 1. The North End of Little Hat Island, with its Colony of Caspian Terns. Photograph from U. S. Biological Survey.

entrance, into which the young were carefully driven. We banded 365 of them and exhausted our supply of No. 6 bands.

Adverse weather kept us more or less idle for the next two or three days, but on the 25th we succeeded in reaching Gull Island, the day being the anniversary of my trip there in 1923 when 259 young gulls were banded. Naturally, a high score was anticipated, but we were disappointed as almost all the young were on the wing, and the careful searches of the entire party netted only thirty young, which were banded. Leaving this island we went to Trout and Whisky Islands, neither of which had previously supported many breeding gulls. On Whisky Island, however, we found a small colony and were able to add sixteen birds to the day's total. On the following day a short run to Stony Reef resulted in the banding of 101 young Common Terns and a Spotted Sandpiper.

The mortality among the young of colonial birds is usually more or less heavy, so whenever possible I endeavor to make "follow-up" trips to ascertain the percentage of banded young that died without reaching maturity. Work of this

nature at Little Hat Island on July 30 resulted in finding thirty-four dead young with bands, seven per cent of the number used. As this islet is devoid of vegetation, I am sure that we found all that did not survive, with the possible exception of such young as swam long distances from the island and were unable to return. Young gulls quickly become water-logged, but it has been my observation that the plumage of young terns is better able to withstand a wetting. At Hat Island only four dead banded gulls were found.

In 1925 we started the work earlier and arrived at St. James on June 20. Upon boarding the steamer at Charlevoix we were delighted to find as fellow passengers, Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Hastings, of South Lyon, Mich., and Mr. and Mrs. Norman A. Wood, of Ann Arbor, Mich., and when we arrived at St. James we met Dr. and Mrs. Frank N. Wilson, also of Ann Arbor. Doctor Wilson and Mr. Hastings were engaged primarily in photography, although Mr. Hastings afterward continued his excellent work at Lone Tree Island in Saginaw Bay, banding more than 1,400 Common Terns.

Our early arrival in 1925 was due primarily to my desire to test one or two methods for capturing adult gulls, and with this in mind I had added to my outfit two powerful focusing flashlights. With the assistance of one of the fishermen, we rigged up a large dip net on an 8-foot pole. The plan was to proceed to a colony of breeding gulls and camp and then by working at night to approach the incubating birds, trusting in the glare of the flashlight to prevent them from flushing until we were close enough to use the net. Unfortunately, we were unable to decide upon the effectiveness of this scheme because of an exceptionally early season.

Mrs. Lincoln and I were landed with a light outfit on Mire Island in the evening of June 27, at about 8 o'clock, and by 9 o'clock our camp was in shape. As this was purely an experiment, arrangements were made for the boatmen to return for us the following morning. Our camp consisted only of a lean-to placed back against the hedge of white cedars that cover one end of the island, and although it was a raw, chilly night we felt that any kind of a light would injure our plans, so the comfort of a fire was lacking. It was after midnight when the moon set and it became dark enough for our purpose, but while waiting our attention was occupied in noting the behavior of the gulls at night. We were surprised to observe how many were in the air as revealed by their calls. Starting from our base with the lights, net, and bands, we made the complete circuit of the island, even to crossing it at two different places, without flushing a single adult gull. The young were everywhere but no nest was found containing fertile eggs; in fact, very few nests were found with either eggs or young, as the chicks seem to leave the nest shortly after they are hatched. We turned the lights out over the water and found the adults resting about fifty yards offshore. Whether they were aware of our presence on the island we were unable to determine but I am inclined to believe that this is a regular procedure after the eggs are hatched.

We returned to camp about 2:00 A. M., built a small fire, and at 2:30 had what we called "first breakfast." It began to get light about this time, and by 3:00 o'clock we could distinguish objects well enough to start to work. By 6:00 A. M. we had banded 100 young and we had covered only about half the island. A high wind came up so that it was only after a thorough wetting and much maneuvering that we were able to get aboard the power-boat that came for us at

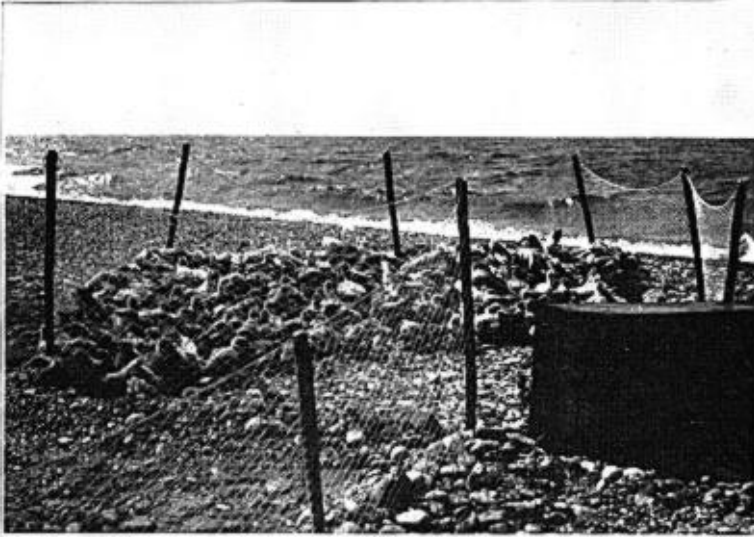


FIGURE 2. Young Caspian Terns in the Corral, ready for Banding. Photograph from U. S. Biological Survey.

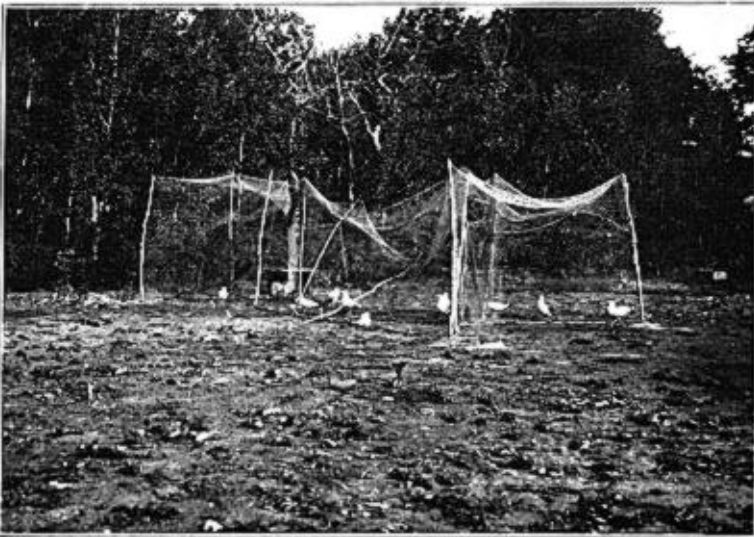


FIGURE 3. Experimental Trap for Herring Gulls, with a few Captured Birds. Photograph from U. S. Biological Survey.

6:30. The flashlight scheme needs further tests, but I believe it will prove useful.

Profiting by the experience gained in 1924, I had added to my equipment a net, seventy-five feet long and three feet wide, to be used at the Caspian Tern colony on Little Hat Island. Work was carried on at that point on July 19, the net being set in a wide V with the converging sides terminating in a corral or pocket. The entire party then proceeded by boat to the opposite end of the island and four drivers landed, the two small boats following slowly down the shores abreast the drivers. The young terns scuttled ahead and soon the ground was literally alive with them, much like the movements of the swarms of fiddler crabs on the South Atlantic coast. More than 600 were secured in this one drive. I had three assistants to help band while two others remained inside the corral to prevent the birds from crowding. This precaution is very important as it is easy for a large number of birds to be smothered. The pocket or corral should always be as large as possible and *never* have any corners into which the birds can gather. The dust from the feather sheaths is apparently a factor which can cause injury to closely packed birds, and operations of this character should not be undertaken except when sufficient help is available. As fast as the young were banded they were released headed toward the nesting ground, toward which they made with all speed. Less than two hours were occupied with the banding.

A trap for adult gulls was built also about a mile from St. James. It was baited with offal from the fish dock and while partially successful, did not capture as many birds as was desired. Altogether 1,753 of these birds were banded during the season.

U. S. BIOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

---

## BANDING GULLS AND TERNS ON UPPER LAKE MICHIGAN

BY WM. I. LYON

In 1924, the Inland Bird Banding Association had secured volunteers for a number of good gull and tern colonies; but no one had volunteered to take Green Bay and Lake Michigan's northwest shore, so the writer and his son decided to work in this territory.

On arriving on the islands, July 25, we found the Herring Gulls all hatched and most of them already in the water; but by steady searching, we were able to band 383. H. C. Wilson was with us and banded a few more, bringing his total to 150, and making the total for the district 533 Herring Gulls banded. There was much high wind and very rough water, and it was so rough we could make little headway in ordinary boats. Some kind person suggested that we appeal to the Coast Guards for help; the Plum Island Guards responded quickly, and pleasantly, and took us to Gravelly Island, Michigan, where we banded our first Caspian Terns, getting 126. It was a new thrill and an eventful ride in the life boat.

We returned to our headquarters at Ephraim where we tried the church for Chimney Swifts, and were successful in banding eighty. The first bird out of the chimney was a "return," one that had gotten into a neighboring house and was banded by H. C. Wilson in 1923. Three weeks later, this same swift was caught at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. The band was removed and sent to Washington, D. C., and the bird released, we hope.