

**BIRD BANDING NEWS**

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

**BIRD BANDING IN 1927 ON LAKES MICHIGAN AND HURON**

BY WM. I. LYON

Our fourth annual bird banding trip started from Waukegan, Illinois, early on the morning of July 3, 1927. Mr. Benjamin T. Gault, of Glenn Ellyn, Illinois, Robert L. Jackson, of Ohio, Illinois, and W. I. Lyon of Waukegan, Illinois, formed the party which started northward by auto. The first stop was at Racine, Wisconsin, where we were joined by Clarke C. Miller and Richard Miller, his brother.

We had a very pleasant trip to Egg Harbor in the Door County peninsula, Wisconsin. We arrived at the resort in time for dinner. During the evening they had a general assembly in the office where guests were requested to do their part with some stunt or give interesting experiences; one of our party explained the work of bird banding and asked any of the men who wished, to join us the next day in the trip to Hat Island. Mr. Smith, an attorney of Dubuque, Iowa, volunteered and proved to be a very pleasant companion and a great help.

Early in the morning, July 4, we were taken by boat to Hat Island and left there, with our lunch and supplies, for the day. On landing, we found the Herring Gulls practically farther advanced than the year before at a week later date. The water of Green Bay was eighteen inches higher than last year. This slightly changed the conditions about the shores of the island and possibly forced some of the gulls to nest in the interior which is fairly open, though covered with a dense growth of nettles mixed with poison ivy and thistles. Included in the vegetation were numerous high bush cranberries. The outer edges of most of the higher islands are well covered with trees. We located the usual number of Red-breasted Merganser nests, which we find on practically every island that we visit. We were very successful and banded 317 Herring Gulls, 2 Red-winged Blackbirds, and 1 Spotted Sandpiper. That evening we drove to Ephraim.

On the morning of July 5, we went to Sister Bay where we had made arrangements for boats to take us to Sister Islands. Harold Wilson, Henry Anderson, W. E. Bond and son William, Edward Wagner, James and Peter Dagett joined us on this trip. It started raining before we got on the boat and it continued all morning. Sometimes it poured and again, it cleared away a little between showers. By the time we were ready for lunch we were all soaked through, but after getting a large fire started we were warmed and dried out, and finished up the islands, making a very good record of 519 Herring Gulls, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 9 Red-winged Blackbirds, and 6 Spotted Sandpipers. The three adult Red-breasted Mergansers were caught and banded on Sister Island. Because of the rain, they stuck to their nests until we were too close for them to escape, as they are not able to spring into flight like a mallard, but have to run through the rocks and weeds to the water to "take off." In this way we were able to overtake them. On the south end of Little Sister Island, we found a colony of Common Terns with twenty-five or fifty nests, all with eggs. This was the first time we had found them on this island. That night when we returned, we found we had been advertised for a bird banding meeting in the local church. We had a very good attendance.

The next morning, July 6, we drove to Gills Rock where the Plum Island Coast Guards took us to Gravel Island. On account of so much high water, there was very little vegetation this year, but we found more young gulls than usual and were successful in banding 387 Herring Gulls, 3 Black Ducks, and 5 Red-winged Blackbirds.

From Gravel Island the Coast Guards took us to Spider Island. We found a few gulls around the north island which is really connected to the southern island, and as soon as we struck the southern island, the entire party was busy trying to capture Great Blue Herons, there being about twenty-five nests in this colony. We succeeded in getting seven, which were photographed. Twelve Herring Gulls, one Black Duck, one Spotted Sandpiper, and one Red-winged Blackbird were also banded. We found that something had eaten a number of birds on the island. Two years ago one of the boys saw what was, apparently, a fox; and, because of the number of gulls eaten, we thought the fox must still be there. That night we returned to the Coast Guard Station and stayed with them for the next three days.

Early on the morning of the seventh, we went to Hog Island, a small island just east of Washington Island, where we succeeded in getting only thirty-eight Herring Gulls, as the higher water had covered up all the low beaches and the birds were nesting on high rocks. Again we spent some time getting four Great Blue Herons which were photographed, Mr. Gault trying some motion pictures. We continued our trip and passed Fisherman Shoal and Fish Island. These are but small bare islands, and the young gulls were so far advanced that, when anyone landed on the island, they would go out to the water and swim to the opposite side of the island. We did not land, therefore, but watched very closely and found no trace of any terns. There were just Herring Gulls nesting on those islands. We continued our trip to Little Gull Island, where we were successful the year before. Found many gulls and had plenty to do the rest of the day. There was a colony of Great Blue Herons on the center of this island but the trees were very high, and we couldn't spare any time in trying to catch the herons. We banded 381 Herring Gulls and 2 Black Ducks on this island.

On the morning of the eighth, we started early for Gravelly Island, Michigan, the home of the Caspian Terns. We carried all the photographing outfit we had on hand hoping for a big day. We were not disappointed because the terns were there in big numbers. On the southeast end of this island, which is a bare gravelly point, in other years there were many nests on the low ground, but the high water had forced the terns to nest up on the gravel bank. The young Caspian Terns stay in herds, so we drove them up into the bushes in the center of the island where many of them hid instead of running for the water. This gave us a chance to hunt them out and band them. The total for this island was 203 Herring Gulls, 347 Caspian Terns, 5 Spotted Sandpipers, and 3 Red-winged Blackbirds. In the afternoon we visited Big Gull Island. This we found to be more heavily timbered and with cleaner ground. There was less poison ivy and nettles than on the other islands, but we found that the island was apparently inhabited by foxes, and there were quite a few remains of young gulls, some that had been killed but a short time. Thirty-four Herring Gulls were banded here.

On July 9 we started away from the Plum Island Station at 4:50 A. M. to make a long run to Big Bay De Noc, or the north end of Green Bay. We had an extremely rough trip up the middle of the Bay. From observation with our binoculars, we could see that Rocky Island had become joined to Little Summer Island, and a fisherman's house had been built on Little Summer. Apparently there were no birds on the island. We kept on until we arrived at Snake Island. This was a new island for us to investigate. We had very good results at Snake Island, banding 148 Herring Gulls, 4 Bronzed Grackles, and 3 Red-winged Blackbirds. We then crossed over to Round Island and, during the trip across, we looked St. Vitals Island over with our binoculars, but, as the chart shows there are shallow and rocky spots in the water, we abandoned the idea of trying to get ashore. On Round Island something had apparently eaten the birds, as we found only 17 Herring Gulls to band. When we got out into Green Bay we were much pleased to find the north wind behind us and did not have such a rough trip as when going northward.

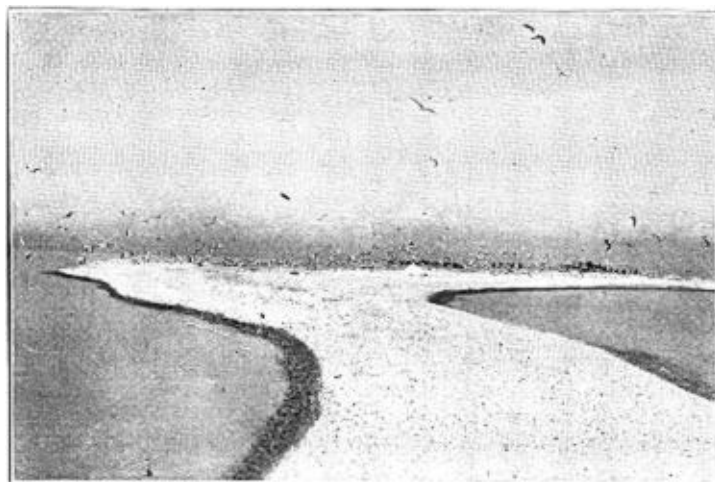
On the morning of July 10 we spent quite a little time photographing the Coast Guard station, men and boats, and then they took us to Gills Rock. The Plum Island Coast Guards have always been very hospitable and cordial in their reception to us, so getting back to the Plum Island station seems like getting home. It is one of the bright spots on the trip, as they are all fine fellows and a happy lot, and it is a great pleasure to be among them. After many farewells at Gills Rock, we got our cars out of the bushes, packed our baggage and were on our way, making Escanaba that night.

The next day, July 11, we spent in traveling and stopped in the upper peninsula to visit the Big Spring and found it well worth the short rough side trip. On arriving at St. Ignace we found we could still get a boat across to Mackinac Island that night, so we stored the cars and transferred the baggage in plenty of time to have dinner, then we had a pleasant run across on the steamer *Islander* to Mackinac Island. This island, we found, was inhabited by the Gullibles and after the steamer landed we found there was a long line of vultures ready to attack the Gullibles for whatever fees they could obtain from them. We visited the Coast Guards that night and made arrangements to start early the next morning for Snow Islands.

On July 12 we started with the Mackinac Coast Guards to the farther point of Snow Islands, passing Goose, LaSalle, Government, Boot, Gravel, Strongs, Crow, Bear and Rover Islands. From observation of these points we were satisfied that there were practically no birds nesting on any of these islands, all being fairly well covered with trees and, apparently, people had been camping on them, so we turned back, and as we approached Marquette Island we could see the Common Terns flying around Fuyards Point. We landed and found about fifty nests with not a bird hatched out. Goose Island was but a short distance and as we had very little time, we knew there would be but little difference with the Common Terns on Goose Island, so we started for St. Martins Point Reef. St. Martins Point Reef was where we found the large colony of Common Terns the year before. Here we found twenty-four young. There were, apparently, two or three hundred nests of Common Terns, nearly all with eggs, so we hurried on to St. Martins Shoal which was the island where we found the Ring-billed Gulls nesting with the Herring Gulls the preceding year.



Nest and Eggs of the Caspian Tern on Gravelly Island.  
Note the Crayfish Claws around the Nest.



Shoe Island, the Home of another Caspian Tern Colony.

As we came to the nesting place of the Ring-billed colony great numbers of old birds rose into the air and as we approached the grounds, we found a much larger nesting ground than the one of last year. It seemed increased to four times the size, and there were a great many of the young birds running about, so there was a good job in store for us. We worked around the island as fast as we could and the results were 58 Herring Gulls and 350 Ring-billed Gulls.

We had to cut our time short and leave the island to get back to catch the steamer to St. Ignace that evening. After dinner we loaded the cars and drove them on the car ferry. When we landed at Mackinac City we left immediately for Charlevoix. The trip was made in the dark and there was a heavy storm. We arrived there at 2:00 o'clock in the morning and found that the steamer left at 8:30 the next morning for St. James.

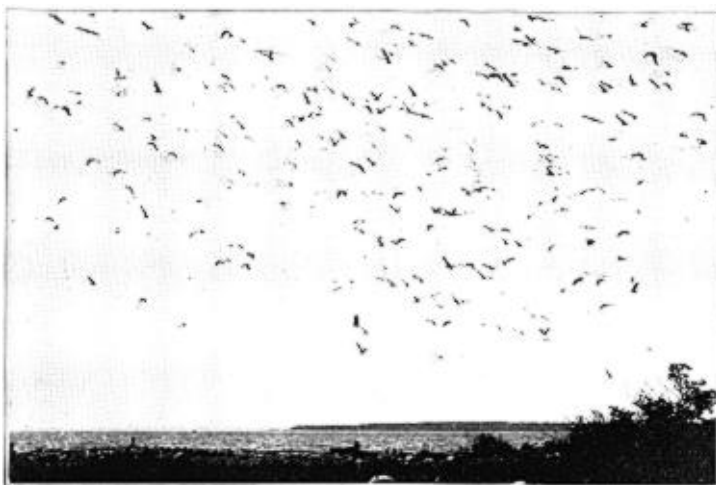
July 13. We were up and on the dock with our baggage in time to get the steamer to Beaver Island. We had a rough trip. The wind was in the southwest and, although the steamer was of fair size it did a good deal of rolling in the trough of the sea, so some of the party were quite affected. We visited at Coast Guards Station at St. James that evening and found them ready and willing to take us out the next morning.

July 14. We started early for Shore Island, the home of the large Caspian Tern colony we had heard so much about. Shoe Island, we found, was entirely bare of vegetation. The young terns were assembled in flocks like sheep, and, as soon as we approached the island, they started for the other side. It was a hard job to keep many of them on the island but we were successful in banding 311 Caspian Terns and 1 Herring Gull. On the westward point of the island, we found a small colony of Common Terns, possibly fifty nests, but only ten were hatched and large enough to be banded.

We proceeded to Hat Island to band gulls; here we found four gulls that had been banded by some preceding party. We searched the island very carefully to see if there had been any ill effects from that visit due to the banding. There were practically no banded young birds dead; in fact, very few remains of any dead so, from all we could see, there had been practically no ill effects from the party that had visited the island. This was very gratifying because some uninformed persons have stated that banding colonies must cause large losses of young birds. The gulls were all very far advanced but we banded 57 Herring Gulls, and 1 Caspian Tern which probably swam over from Shoe Island. Hat Island was a mass of poison ivy and nettles. There were some Great Blue Herons nesting in the trees in the center, but we did not attempt to band them. On our return trip we passed close to Grape Island but could see only a few gulls. We also passed Mire Island and observed two small rocky bars, the largest of which is called Snake Island by the local people. This bar has no name on the government charts; in fact, it is indicated only as shallow water. Here we found a very large colony of Common Terns without a single egg being hatched. There were three or four hundred nests. Three had four eggs each, one nest had one colored egg and one pure white egg, while another had two eggs with a runt egg only about one-half the size of the other. There must have been a heavy storm about a month preceding our visit, as, at one spot, we found about one hundred eggs that had been washed from the nests in the grass to one edge of the island; these facts may explain the late hatching of Common Terns.



Nesting Site of the Ring-billed Gulls on St. Martins Shoal.



Ring-billed Gulls in the air at St. Martins Shoal.

On July 15 we left the St. James Harbor and went to the south of Garden Island, passing just north of High Island, where King Ben has his colony, to Gull Island. We found very few birds upon the shore, but on the west side of the island there seemed to be a large open field that was filled with small hazel brush, wild gooseberries and high bush cranberries. Here the gulls were not able to take to the water and swim, so they ran under the bushes to hide. We were successful in banding 166 Herring Gulls and 1 Spotted Sandpiper. We were much surprised to see large bunches of hairy puccoon in blossom, also quantities of bluebells, daisies, and lilies. There were nettles, poison ivy, and thistles, as usual, and during all of our stay in the Beaver Islands we found millions of biting flies, emphasizing the necessity of bird banders being entirely immune to high water and bug bites, poison ivy, nettles, thistles, and hardships. On the way back we passed Trout Island, on which a house had been built, which explained the absence of gulls. We landed at Whiskey Island but the birds took to the water as soon as they saw us coming, and we banded only eight birds. We were able to land the large boat close to the beach so it was very easy to get out. Right at this point there was a very unusual gull's nest about three feet wide and close to two feet high, containing one egg. On this island, besides a million flies, there were several legions of extra large mosquitoes and we did not stay very long. On the way home we passed by Squaw Island where the lighthouse is, and no birds were in sight, so we returned to St. James. For dinner we were given a rare treat to whitefish livers, and that evening, after writing the day's events and doing a little packing, we took in the local dance.

July 16. This morning we packed, took an auto ride about Beaver Island and caught the steamer to Charlevoix, from whence we ran to Manistee by auto that night. We had hoped to go as far as Ludington, but on account of the heavy storm we had to stop at Manistee. The next morning, July 17, we started early and completed the trip back to Waukegan in safety.

The numbers of birds banded were as follows: 2057 Herring Gulls, 350 Ring-billed Gulls, 659 Caspian Terns, 34 Common Terns, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 6 Black Ducks, 11 Great Blue Herons, 12 Spotted Sandpipers, 1 Killdeer, 17 Red-winged Blackbirds, 4 Bronzed Grackles. Total, 3154.

WAUKEGAN, ILLINOIS.

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### TERN BANDING ON LAKE ERIE

BY EDWARD S. THOMAS

We devoted four days from July 21 to 23, during the past summer to the study and the banding of Common Terns on Lake Erie. The expedition, sponsored by the Ohio State Museum, of Columbus, Ohio, was headed by James S. Hine, Curator of Natural History, and consisted also of R. W. Franks, John Thomas and the writer. Charles F. Walker joined us on July 23.

As on the previous year, practically the entire time was spent on Starve Island, but the last day was devoted to a tour of various other islands.

Everywhere, we found that practically all of the young were flying and that there were comparatively few eggs and nestlings. At the same time on the preceding year there had been plenty of downy young and eggs. Because of these conditions, the prospects looked very poor for banding any considerable number of birds. The young flyers were entirely too clever to permit our cap-