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5,000 GULLS MARKED IN MIGRATION STUDY CARRY COLORED BANDS

Five thousand herring gulls have been marked with brightly-colored bands supplied by the U. S. Biological Survey to the Linnaean Society of New York, the National Association of Audubon Societies, and the Northeastern Bird Banding Association, in furthering a cooperative study of the migration and other habits of the birds. Young birds not yet able to fly were banded at 10 key banding stations along the Atlantic coast from Labrador to New York State.

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, herring gulls have greatly increased in numbers. Those that breed commonly along the New England coast to Labrador winter farther south along the Atlantic coast to the Gulf of Mexico. Information on their fall and winter distribution, however, is rather limited and data obtained in recent years have been based largely on gulls marked with the Survey's aluminum bands. This information has been slow to accumulate because in most cases the recovery of bands had to await the death or injury of the gulls.

Use of colored bands in obtaining "sight recoveries" is expected to speed up tracing the first season movements of birds from the colonies where they were hatched. So far as known, this is the first time colored bands have been used on a large scale in studying bird migration. Their use by the Survey thus far has been confined mainly to migration studies of smaller birds in local areas.

Bird students, fishermen, seamen, coast guardsmen, stevedores, ferry-boat captains, and others can assist in the study by reporting "sight recoveries" to the Gull Survey, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, or the U. S. Biological Survey, Washington, D.C. Persons correctly reporting observations of banded birds will be informed of the place where they were banded. Reports of recoveries should include accurate descriptions of the position and color of the bands on the legs, and information where the birds were seen and on what date.

Red, blue, and yellow bands were used along with the Biological Survey aluminum bands at the 10 banding stations, each station having its own color combination. Some stations were assigned a single color, others a combination of two. In reporting observations of these birds it is important, therefore, to note the relative position of the bands--whether the yellow band, for example, is above or below a blue band, and whether the metal band is above or below the colored bands. A few adult birds--those in nearly white plumage--carry a black band on one leg and one or more colored bands on the other.