

disgustedly wrote the U.S. Government; "Dear Sirs; I shot one of your pet crows the other day and followed instructions attached to it. I washed it and boiled it and surved it. It was turrible. You should stop trying to fool the people with things like this" ?

MASS BANDING OF CRESTED TERNS.

John Liddy. '

When we visited Pelican Island off Cape Portland, Tasmania, on December 1, 1962, we found 140 nestlings and an estimated 1,000-1,500 eggs of the Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*). The Island was located and briefly described in The Bird Bander (Vol. 1 No. 6 p. 117). A further visit was planned for December 28, 1962, to band the rest of the young. Because of the distances involved our time on the Island would be strictly limited, and as we could count on the presence of 1,000 plus large runners, considerable thought was given to methods of handling the bands and the runners to minimise the time required to collect the young birds and apply the bands. The methods described below were adopted and can be recommended. With modifications they would be applicable for other species in similar situations.

1) Opening the Bands. 1,000 bands were opened during the previous week. Each string of 100 was divided into 5 sequences of 20 each, opened to the correct gap and then packaged by folding in paper. The sequence number (1 to 50) was written on the outside of each package. The 5 packages of 20 each for each string of 100 were then placed in a small calico bag, which was in turn marked on the outside in order 1 to 10. The 10 small calico bags were then tied in sequence on to a length of string and the whole stuffed into a large calico bag. This gave 1,000 open bands in easily obtainable sequence down to units of 20. It would thus be necessary to sort only the last run of 20, assuming that less than 1,000 runners were banded, and assuming also that excess packages were not opened.

2) Gathering the Runners. As expected, the runners were all comparatively large, i.e. 3 to 5 weeks old. It was initially decided to attempt to herd the runners into a large corral, but the method described below was adopted and is far superior. I had available 17 panels, each 3 feet square of 1 inch wire netting mounted in a square of 10 gauge fencing .

Foot note: ' /Formerly of Riverside, Tasmania, now at Kingscliff, New South Wales.



Crested Tern chicks being herded on Moon
Island, Swansea, N.S.W.

Photo: S.G.Lane.

wire. These panels were looped together in a long line by loose wire or cord rings (3 or 4 per section join) so that they could be "concertinaed" for transport. (These panels are used for portable drop and automatic traps. For the application under discussion, panels made of 1 ft. rabbit netting would be suitable.) Also available was about 30 feet of mesh wire about 18 inches high, which was used as two 15 ft. wings.

On the day I was fortunate to have the assistance of Messrs. Athol, Viv and Robin Dawe, Keith and Max Targett, Bonnie O'Brien and Henry Armitage. The party was landed onto the Island in two batches at 11 a.m. and 11.20 a.m. The panels were erected as a zig-zag across the Island, with a 15 ft. wing on each side, the whole forming a shallow crescent. The panels and wings were free standing. The eight members of the party then gathered a group of about 700 runners from the colony in a compact bunch. These were then brought quite easily to within about 15 yards of the barrier entrance and about 100 of the runners were herded against the barrier. As hoped, they broke up into groups of 10 to 20 birds against the various v's of the barrier. There was thus no danger of crowding and consequent suffocation. Three of the party at the rear of the main group easily held the remaining 600 or so birds while the rest of the party applied bands to the birds against the barrier. As these were banded they were lifted over the barrier where

they formed a rather compact group with adult birds some 30 yards beyond the barrier. Another 100 or so birds were then driven in, banded and released, etc., until the main group had all been processed. A second drive over the area of the main colony yielded a group of about 300 runners, which were banded in a similar manner. A third drive yielded a further 100 or so, and a final and thorough drive, with searching under rocks gave a further 50 or so.

Due to the time factor, no check was made on the 140 nestlings banded some 4 weeks previously, but judging from the numbers handled well over 100 of these were present.

At the conclusion of banding, the barrier was folded up, and we were off the Island a little before 1 p.m. In less than 2 hours 994 terns were banded and some 100 to 140 previously banded runners were also handled. One large Pacific Gull (Larus pacificus) chick was also banded. Early in the banding of the terns I noticed a single half grown Silver Gull (L. novae-hollandiae) chick. I was unable to band it at the time, and did not see it again.

This method of handling large numbers of well grown runners can be recommended. Three or four persons can readily control a group of at least 700 birds, and they can be herded quite readily. The method is applicable mainly to flat and comparatively cleared areas. I doubt if the method would be effective on heavily vegetated slopes, as for instance on the tern colonies on Little Waterhouse Island. It is ideal for areas similar to the Five Island, as illustrated on the cover of "The Bird Bander" , Vol.1, No.3.

The effect of herding a large group of runners is indeed spectacular. The Island is comparatively flat, with quite a lot of half buried boulders. Every now and then there would be a natural restriction in the path of the runners, and they would bank up and then pour through the gaps in a manner well worthy of a Hollywood western or biblical extravaganza.

To date only one of the young terns banded has been recovered, found dead at the mouth of the Coal River, Richmond, Tasmania, some 145 miles south and 4 months after banding. To shatter our complacency, the bird was wearing a band on each leg; 070-39904 applied December 1, 1962, and 070-56368 applied December 28, 1962.