

The Silver Gull Banding Programme

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The Silver Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*) is becoming one of the best known, scientifically, of Australian birds, thanks to the Altona Survey Group (Wheeler and Watson, *Emu*, 1963) and to the interest of many banders since the scheme started in 1953.

The results of ten years banding are contained in two papers in the current volume (vol. 9, No. 2) of the C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research Journal. Banders will receive their copies in due course. This has been a profitable cooperative effort, and distinctive regional movement patterns have been revealed that can be related to the habitat and food requirements of this species for survival and breeding. The value of these results stem from the comparison that can be made between several regional populations, in terms of direction and distance of movement and proportion of birds involved.

Most of the data are the usual random recoveries of dead or accidentally captured gulls. But the much smaller amount provided by banders who retrap marked birds, especially at the nest, and who patiently read band numbers (at some cost in bread etc.) has a value out of all proportion to its modest volume. Thus we are beginning to learn about age at breeding, constancy of breeding place and return to natal colony, and perhaps most interesting the constancy of winter quarters.

This study follows a pattern that is likely to be typical of many others. The initial period of extensive banding has established the seasonal cycle and movement, and some aspect of the individual life history. The next stage should include much more observation and identification of banded birds, including individual marking with colour bands or plumage dyes. Without doubt, much fascinating and important information on daily, seasonal and annual movement and habits will emerge.

The present results also indicate which aspect of field study might be most profitably undertaken on the silver gull. One of these is the factors which determine colony size and which individual can or cannot breed each year. For this, age and origin must be known and a programme of colour banding young for several years was commenced in Oct.-Dec., 1964.

At Five Islands, 5000 large chicks were

banded with monel on the left leg and blue on the right; at Lake Bathurst 1500 chicks got monel right and blue left. These colour bands are a new type for which we have high hopes as regards both visibility and durability. They are banded "Scotchlite" on aluminium, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch high. The Lake Bathurst model is heavier gauge aluminium, and the Five Islands one is thinner gauge with white "Scotchcal" on the inside to increase durability. The latter is easier to handle and looks like winning.

Although it is not intended to embark on much field work until there are 3 or 4 year groups with different colours to observe, we would much appreciate information on the whereabouts of these blue banded gulls, specifying which leg and commenting on the colour band if you wish.

"SENIOR" SILVEREYES

The Fifth Annual Report of The Australian Bird Banding Scheme, July, 1958, to June, 1959, records a total of 1286 Eastern Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) banded to June, 1959. Consequently the chances of recovering birds more than five years after banding are still rather remote.

This situation should rapidly change as a result of the increasing numbers banded since that time and we may yet find that longevity in Silvereyes is appreciably more common than is generally considered likely for birds of this size.

In the meantime, two further examples of birds banded at North Ryde, N.S.W., and re-trapped at banding site over five years later, are of interest (see *Aust. Bird Bander*, June, 1964, p.51).

010-10343 (Sydney Type) Banded 26.7.59.

Retrapped 26.9.64 62 months

010-10406 (Tasmanian Type) Banded 1.8.59

Retrapped 25.6.60, 28.4.62,

22.8.62, 30.8.64 61 months

— S. G. LANE, Lane Cove, N.S.W.