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Laughing Gull Nesting Mortality

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feeling is that the mortality that occurs from both these causes is minimal. During the five years of monitoring this site I never found there to be a dead or a missing nestling after banding. Reese (1972) likewise saw no direct evidence of fratricide or cannibalism. Whenever possible, I band the young at five to seven weeks of age, which I consider to be the ideal age for banding nestlings.

Wallace (1948) stated that "... they often appear to raise a second brood, though what appears to be a second brood could conceivably be merely a reoccupation of a favored nesting site by a new pair after it has been vacated by the first." Potter and Gillespie (1926) caught a banded owl incubating eggs at the same site where it was banded incubating the previous year. Stewart (1972) reports that a banded female taken from a nest with five young on 27 July 1939 was captured on 5 December 1939 from a nest with three young at the same place. The double brood at Somerset II in 1977 was definitely produced by the same banded female.

Conclusions

Over the five year period, 1973-1977, this nest site was used every year. At least three different adult females had been present at this site during that period. Of the 23 young produced I believe a high percentage, if not all, of the young fledged. The 1977 double nesting was done by the same female. A fully-fledged young owl from a previous nesting was in the nest while the parent birds began raising a second brood.

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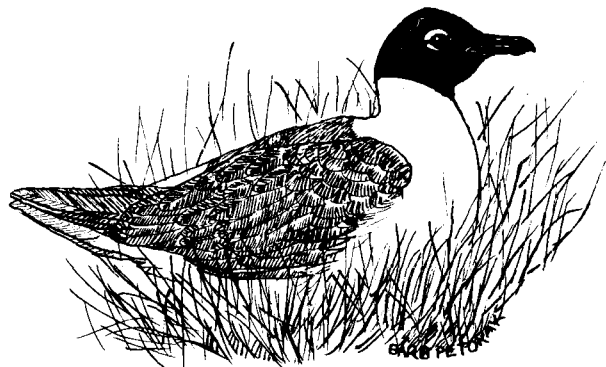
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Laughing Gull nesting mortality

John C. Miller

While banding young Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) at Stone Harbor, New Jersey, on 15 July 1978, I found a few hundred dead Laughing Gulls around their nests and some in their nests. I judged the age of these dead chicks to be about two and a half weeks.



I feel that there were a few major factors causing mortality in this colony. First, inclement weather; we were having temperatures in the low 50's F (10° C). Second, maggots were another cause of death; I saw maggots on some of the live chicks which were in nests with dead ones. Also, apparently there was a very high tide, with water reaching and entering the nests, making the young wet and cold. I was not able to determine if competition from the increasingly large nesting colonies of Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls in the nearby area caused additional mortality.

On the whole, the gulls had a good nesting year in the salt marshes, even with all the dead chicks. I banded 950± young birds on this day. Few young birds were found dead in the Herring and Great Black-backed Gull colonies on this day. 📖

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