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## Marine Birds Injured by Welding Rods

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pugnacity toward intruders at their nests, I suspect that the percentage is high. On several occasions I have had individuals with eggs or young in their nests dart quickly and directly at me and strike my hand, arm, and head with their bills. It is not uncommon for the bill strikes to draw blood. Bent (1948) cited similar instances where individual Brown Thrashers have struck observers at their nests. Compared to my observations on the Northern Mockingbird (*Minus polyglottos*), the Brown Thrasher certainly demonstrates more pugnacity and boldness in defending its young and nest site. The mockingbird usually sounds its tick call or performs repeated dive bombs at a human, cat, or dog; however, I have never had an individual dart quickly from the nest and come directly at me striking with its bill with such force as to produce blood. Again in certain individual Brown Thrashers at least, their distress vocalizations produced when an intruder is at the nest are more intense than those of the Northern Mockingbird.

I thank George Clark and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Those of Clark were especially useful. This study was supported by Rich Plan of Florida to which I am deeply grateful for their financial aid.—Walter Kingsley Taylor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida 32816.

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**Marine birds injured by welding rods.**—The Marineland Research Laboratory of Marineland, Inc., St. Johns County, Florida, has been operating an avian rehabilitation project since July 1976. While the vast majority of birds rescued had ailments typical of a coastal environment, on two occasions marine birds were found that had been injured by welding rods.

In the first case, Mrs. Sandy Gleeson reported a large bird on the beach 400 m north of the Marineland complex on the morning of 26 March 1981. Upon investigation, a live, adult Northern Gannet (*Sula bassanus*) was found in a weakened and listless condition. The bird was taken to the facility for recovery where a gross physical examination revealed no cause for the bird's condition. The only abnormality noted was a stiff lower neck, but no injury was found by palpatating the neck. The gannet was placed on supportive therapy of intubations of liquids and forced feedings of fish. Observations throughout the day suggested that the bird may have been improving by the end of the day. It was rather surprising that the gannet was found dead the next morning.

A general necropsy showed both the external and internal aspects of the bird to be grossly normal. However, a large foreign body was found lodged between the beginning of the esophagus and the apex of the stomach. Later identified as a stainless-steel welding rod, it measured 44.8 cm long and just under 1 cm in greatest diameter (Fig. 1). I believe it was responsible for the gannet's condition. The cranial end of the rod had become wrapped in a large fold of esophageal tissue and was lying along the neck vertebrae where it could not be felt externally. The rod had induced erosion in the mucosae, which had nearly punctured the esophagus. The mucosae in the stomach showed no gross pathological lesions, but the rod had distended the apex of the stomach to the point where it partially occluded the vent. While a large amount of fecal material was present in the cloacal bursa, the presence of the rod did not greatly impare functioning of the gastro-intestinal system in that

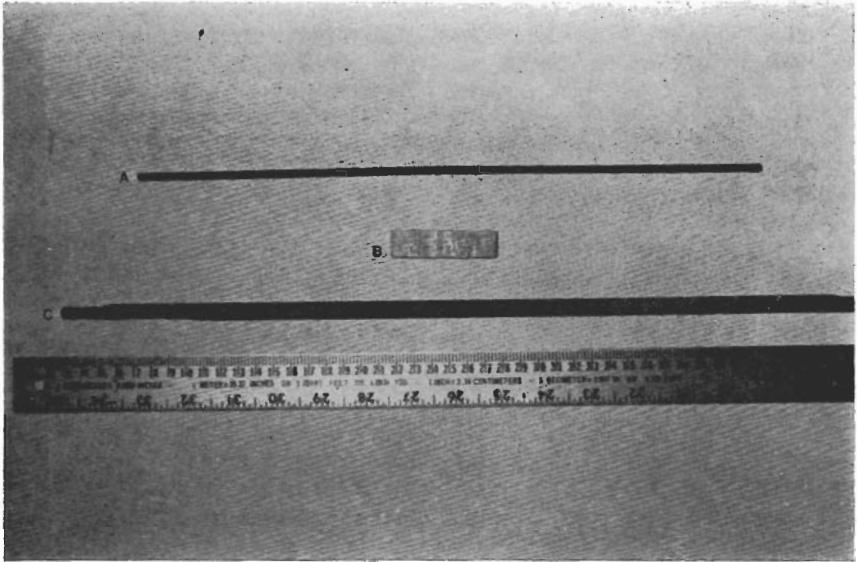


Fig. 1. A. 35.3 cm wire rod recovered from the breast of a Brown Pelican. B. Left leg band from a Northern Gannet. C. 44.8 cm stainless-steel welding rod found in the gastro-intestinal tract of a Northern Gannet.

the food that had been force-fed the day before was fully digested. A similar case in England has been reported by Snook (1977, Brit. Birds 70:35) in which a weak Northern Gannet was found in a field after having swallowed a 44 cm long, 2 mm diameter brass welding rod, which later caused the bird's death.

The gannet had been banded while too young to fly on 9 September 1967 near Barachois, Quebec, Canada, by J. Poulin (band number 588-73422). Worn for some 14.5 years, the band (Fig. 1) was still legible and carried several spots of what appeared to be yellow paint.

In a second case, an immature, unbanded Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) was brought to the Marineland facility on the evening of 22 January 1982. A wire rod, 35.3 cm long and 3 mm in diameter, was found to have punctured the bird's right breast 10 cm. Although the wound was primarily subcutaneous, the rod did extend into the breast musculature about 4 cm but was easily removed by Mr. David Nelson of Marineland. The pelican was then placed on appropriate support therapy, ate quite well, and following recovery, was released unbanded to the wild on 6 February 1982. The rod was the core from a 3/16 inch stainless-steel welding rod (Fig. 1).

I thank the Bird Banding Laboratory at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland for providing banding data on the gannet and Dr. Michael Stoskopf for his assistance in locating the reference to the case in England.—Robert L. Jenkins, Marineland Research Laboratory, Rt. 1, Box 122, St. Augustine, Florida 32084 (Present address: National Aquarium in Baltimore, Pier 3, 501 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.)

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