

NOTES ON THE HERRING GULL (LARUS ARGENTATUS).

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Between June 8th and October 26th the writer cruised by launch from Wiarton to Sault Ste. Marie, visiting nearly all the islands included in the Manitoulin group. Throughout the season herring gulls were very numerous. On and after July 21st the immature birds, in brown-gray plumage, began to appear.

These gulls are reported to nest freely on Half Moon Island, where the fishermen obtain plenty of eggs for eating. On July 21st, when we visited Wall Island, I saw old nests, and also a dead, half-grown gull. What appeared to be the remains of a nest was also observed on James Island, and many gulls made it a resting place. This species is also reported to nest on some of the islands in the north channel.

A number of well-informed fishermen and hunters report that the herring gull destroys whole families of young wild ducks. Following the flock as it swims in open water, they hover over the little ducks, which try to escape by diving, and swallow them as soon as they come to the surface.

On September 27th the writer saw a small flock of what appeared to be hooded mergansers off the west end of Barrie Island. Several herring gulls hovered near and dropped to the surface of the water alongside the ducks as soon as they rose to the surface, swam up and appeared to take something away from them. On October 1st a large flock of American mergansers were fishing along the Lake Woolsey side of Indian Point. In spite of a fresh wind blowing on shore, they fished close to shore in the shallow water, following up the innumerable minnows which were to be found at this locality. A number of herring gulls mingled with the ducks, and paid close attention to them as they rose from beneath the water. I shot two of the ducks, and found their mouths overflowing with minnows.

Mr. J. Merrylees, of Gore Bay, hunter and taxidermist, says that the gulls regularly rob the ducks of their fish when they rise to swallow their catch. This appears to be the only conclusion to be drawn from the above observations. It was further stated by Mr. E. Gaulin, of Meldrum Bay, that the gulls rob the loons as well as the ducks.

From evidences seen this summer, the herring gull has at least one dangerous natural enemy. On July 10th the writer discovered four duck hawks along the cliffs of the north side of