

## KEEPING UNWANTED GULLS AWAY - A PROGRESS REPORT

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Nearly 50 years ago, wires were strung over fish ponds to discourage fish-eating birds from taking fish destined for other uses (McAtee and Piper 1936). Twenty years ago, overwiring of open ditches began on airports to keep ducks from using them and causing hazards to aircraft (Solman 1973). Both techniques used coarse wires spaced closely enough to form a physical barrier to prevent ducks and herons from landing on or taking off from the water.

In the past 5 years, it has been found that widely-spaced fine wires and nylon monofilament lines could discourage gulls from landing on water reservoirs and sanitary landfill sites (Amling 1980 and Ichikawa 1981, respectively).

Studies in Toronto in the summer of 1982 have shown that fine wires and monofilament lines can decrease Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) use of limited areas by more than 90% (Blokpoel and Tessier 1983). The reduction of use by domestic pigeons (*Columba livia*) was observed to be much less. It is believed that the wire or monofilament may act as a psychological rather than a physical barrier to the gulls.

In December 1982, a 1-year trial began to test the effectiveness of thin wires at a large sanitary landfill site in New York State. Several species of gulls have been involved at different times of the year. The wires are high enough above the working surface to permit normal passage of packer trucks and compactors. So far there are significantly fewer gulls under the wires than in areas not covered by wires. The study is being carried out by L.G.L. Ltd. who will report on it after its completion.

During the 1983 breeding season, experiments with monofilament lines were carried out in a very large colony of Ring-billed Gulls at the Eastern Headland of the Outer Harbour of the City of Toronto, Ontario. At the beginning of the nesting season, experimental plots were established on different soil and vegetation types. The average number of nests per plot was less than 4 for the ones covered by monofilament lines compared to more than 200 for the control plot that did not have wires over them. Complete details of that

study will be presented by Hans Blokpoel at the Bird Control Seminar at Bowling Green, Ohio, next month.

Gulls are causing problems at a zoo in Quebec and at a turkey farm in Ontario by competing with captive animals for food. We have suggested the use of overhead fine wires or monofilament as a control method. We have recently heard of successful use of parallel fine wires to exclude gulls from an industrial water intake. Use of wiring, as suggested by McAtee and Piper in 1936 is still in use with good success at some fish hatcheries in Canada.

The use of fine wires or monofilament lines is effective in excluding gulls from certain locations. However, in some situations application of the technique is not feasible. Examples include agricultural fields where crops such as tomatoes are being damaged by gulls and the edges of canal locks on the St. Lawrence Seaway that have become slippery due to gull droppings. In addition, we cannot use fine wiring to keep gulls off airport runways where they are a threat to flight safety. Blokpoel (1983) describes the gull problem in Ontario and the few available options for control. Population control is not considered feasible. Where fine wires are not effective or feasible, permits to shoot can be furnished by Canadian Government officials in cases where it is duly warranted.

In summary, we believe that the wires are effective in some situations in keeping unwanted gulls away. As gull numbers increase, we expect increasing interest in that method of keeping gulls out of areas where their presence is inconvenient or dangerous to man's interests.

### LITERATURE CITED

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