



By DICK MILLER
Highland School Librarian

In last week's column we discussed Wildlife Conservation and I recommended a few books on the subject. Let's talk about it some more.

ONCE UPON A TIME, in my checkered and colorful career, I journeyed a thousand miles west of Hawaii to Midway Island. Among other things, I acted in an unofficial capacity as photographer for Dr. Hubert Frings of Penn State University. Dr. Frings had been retained by the Navy to try and rid the island of the Laysan Albatross, or "Gooney Bird," as the albatross is familiarly called.

On the ground, the Gooney is a clumsy clown, staggering over the sand and falling on his chin. His antics are very peculiar, hence the name "Gooney." In the air, however, the Gooney seems



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a bird of another feather. He is amazingly beautiful and graceful, soaring, wheeling, and diving on his six-foot wings. And the Gooney loves to float and glide on the soft, sea breezes. In fact, it is this love of soaring on the rising air currents that got the Gooney in trouble with the Navy.

Midway Island is the southern terminus for the Barrier Flight, which is a flying radar-guard between Midway and Adak, in the Aleutians. Every three minutes a huge plane takes off on a fourteen-hour flight, north. The plane is equipped with sophisticated electronic gear, designed to locate possible enemy attackers. Each plane costs six million dollars and carries a crew of twenty-four men.

ONE OF THE FAVORITE flying areas of the Gooney is directly over the strip where the radar-planes land and take off. Occasionally a plane will strike a bird and some damage is done--to both bird and plane. A flying bird the size of a turkey makes a pretty respectable hole in the radar dome of a plane.

As yet, the Gooneys had caused no planes to crash, although it was expected to happen at any time. Nevertheless, thousands of dollars of damage was being done to the planes. Dr. Frings, as an expert ornithologist, was to find a way to remedy this costly and dangerous situation.

The first thought naturally occurring to anyone would be simply to kill off the birds. Aside from the humanitarian viewpoint, this would be extremely impractical--for two reasons; first, the sheer numbers of the birds--tens of thousands of them--and second, the peculiar migration habits of the albatross.

After a Gooney is born and leaves the nest it soars out over the Pacific and disappears for five years, after which it returns to the island and mates. (By attaching tiny radio transmitters to several Gooneys, Dr. Frings determined the birds spend the entire five years on the open ocean. He also discovered that Gooneys have a gland at the base of the beak which separates the salt from the sea-water and enables the Gooney to drink from the ocean. They feed on fish.) This five-year cycle means that every year a new generation of birds returns to the island. So, to kill all the Gooneys would take at least five years and unbelievable carnage.

Dr. Frings and his group tried many plans. The Gooney has several calls, whistles, and beak-clatterings by which it communicates with its fellow birds. One of these calls is a wild, screeching whistle known as the "distress call." We took a tape recorder and searched the nesting grounds until we found a particularly mean-looking old rooster. Our scheme was to annoy him until he gave forth with a loud distress call, which we would then record on tape.

NOW, THE BEAK of a Gooney is a very dangerous weapon. It is about five inches long and wickedly hooked on the end. It is sharp enough to cut to the bone. Also, the Gooney has an awfully nasty habit of vomiting on its tormentors. This foul liquid has the consistency and odor of rotten fish oil and is almost impossible to wash

Tammi Feted By Jefferson Day Care Center Socialites



By Jovanna Williams

While Mrs. Lessie Bea Collins read the story of Mary Poppins, 22 bright-eyed youngsters listened excitedly in happy anticipation of the ice cream and cake they knew was soon to come.

The Birthday Girl was Tammi Bass, daughter of Mrs. DeGloris Bass. All her little friends at Jefferson Day Care Center were invited to the party given in her honor. Horns blew and balloons popped as NYC girls Vera Carson, Booby Johnson, and Danny Pompey tried to get them in order for pictures. MEANWHILE, Tammi grew more and more excited at the idea of becoming a big girl at four years old.

All giggles and smiling faces, the children sang Happy Birthday, blew out candles, and sat down to enjoy cake, ice cream, cupcakes, punch, and candy. The cake was decorated in blue, green, and white with a picture of Mary Poppins, and inscribed "Happy Birthday Tammi. All the while they were eating, they blew on the noisemakers and worked at keeping their party hats on.

Tammi was so thrilled over her gift that as the others ate more ice cream and cake, she kept demanding, repeatedly, "Let me see, let

me see."

Later, they all played games while Tammi, dressed in a green cotton dress with embroidered bodice and him, was the center of attraction. Birthday celebrants pictured seated (l-r): Dicky Thompson, Felica Moore, Midge Davis, Patrick Johnson, Carla Lamb, Jasetta Haggard---Standing (l-r): Janice Lamb, Nathaniel Collins Jr., Tracy Collins, Pierre Collins, Tammi Bass, Ronnie Whitehead, Dwayne Collins, Regenalnd Conway, Tammy Riley, Ray Riley, Joel Collins, Millie Collins, Samone Davis, Fredrica James, and Sue Collins.

me see."

Brotherhood Week At Jo Mackey School



The students, employees and parents of the Jo Mackey School in North Las Vegas donated more than 750 items of canned and dried food to the Floydia Harvey Family as their Brotherhood Week Project for 1966. Pictured above (l-r) are members of the Project Committee, Julia House, Frances Young, Gerthena Washington and Norma Cherry. Committee members not pictured include Julia Holmes and Verna Jean Coleman, Chairman.

'66-'67 School Calendar

PUBLIC SCHOOLS in the Clark County School District will start one week earlier during the 1966-67 school year than during the present year.

"We want to make sure parents who are planning vacations and other out-of-town events during the latter part of the year, understand that registration will be held for all students August 26 and 29 and that classes will actually start August 30," a spokesman for the District said. This school year began the day after Labor Day.

The change in the calendar was made to allow for a longer spring vacation which will run from March 20-24 next year and will also permit teacher/student participation in the National Music Educators Conference expected to attract 5,000 visitors to the southern Nevada community.

The school year will be one day shorter than this year, 180 days total, and schools will let out for summer vacation on June 2 against June 3 this year.

Principals may request teachers who are new to the District, or those with new assignments, to report on August 24. The annual orientation day at the Convention Center will be held August 25.

off.

At the risk to life, limb, and personal popularity we finally succeeded in recording an authentic distress call. We took the tape to the landing strip where we had set up a string of loud-speakers around the strip. We connected our tape recorder to the amplifier. The plan was to play the Gooney's distress call as loud as possible and scare all the Gooneys away.

The plan did not work. The Gooneys were scared, all right, but after the initial lift-off into the sky the birds settled down to their original places. They would not leave. We gave up our experiments with sound and began experimenting with sight and color. We strung colored streamers around the landing strip in hopes of frightening the birds away from landing. A noble effort, but also unsuccessful.

With the help of volunteer sailors, we bodily transported all the birds near the airfield to the other side of the island. They simply walked back and settled disdainfully into the sand.

There were other birds on the island; Fairy Terns, Sooty Terns, Boobies, Frigate Birds, etc., etc. They also presented a problem but as they were much smaller than the Gooney, danger to flying aircraft was much less. The Sooty Terns were more cowardly than the Gooneys. They could be driven off by rock-throwing, which we did. WE DID NOT LEAVE A TERN UNSTONED.

Meanwhile, the Navy had shipped a bulldozer from Midway to Kure Island, some eighty miles away. There, they actually built a landing strip for the exclusive purpose of giving the Gooneys a private airfield. The Navy hoped the birds would abandon Midway and move their soaring operations to uninhabited Kure. The Gooneys showed no interest. They stayed on Midway--and as far as I know they are there yet.

CONSERVATION IS A GOOD profession. It provides action, adventure, knowledge and travel. There is no place in conservation work for softies or dropouts. It requires educated, dedicated, hard-working men and women. If you have the courage to face the sometimes trying job of gaining an education then, perhaps, the profession of conservation is for you.