



46 & 47. Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, Kent, November 1977. Top, bill appearing wholly pale and tip-tilted; bottom, bill appearing typically dark (Guy Harrison)

adults, and that even the dark culmen ridge may not always be obvious. This emphasises the need for caution when identifying White-billed Divers on bill colour alone: clearly the other field marks of the species (described in the paper by Burn and Mather) should also be carefully checked.

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**White-tailed Plover resting on its tarsi** With reference to Geoffrey Boyle's note on Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* resting on their tarsi (*Brit. Birds* 70: 458), I noticed similar behaviour by the White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* at Packington, Warwickshire, on 14th July 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 465-471). When resting in this way, the White-tailed Plover's tarsi and toes stretched in front of it to about the level of the tip of its bill and its body was kept far enough off the ground by its fibulae for it not to look unusual. Could resting in this manner be regular among other related plovers?

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**Mediterranean Gull dropping bivalves** On 29th September 1976, on a beach near De Panne, Belgium, I observed an adult Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* dropping bivalves. Flying at a height of about 9 m, the gull drooped its head and released a mollusc from its beak; it then swooped to the sand below and rose again with, apparently, the same mollusc. The whole action was repeated and, on the fifth occasion, the contents of the bivalve were consumed. I visited the exact site, a

hard sand bank, and found many broken shells of common cockles *Cardium edule* and tellins *Tellina*. Although the larger gulls commonly drop bivalves, I can find no mention in the literature of this behaviour by Mediterranean Gulls.

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**Head pattern of Sabine's Gull** On 12th June 1976, at Frodsham, Cheshire, Peter Campbell and I picked up a sick, adult, full summer-plumaged Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. It died the same day and was submitted for analysis to the Department of Agriculture: it proved to be a female with egg-bearing ovaries. I was surprised that its grey hood did not extend onto the nape, but terminated on the crown (see plate 48).



48. Adult female Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Cheshire, June 1976 (P. Campbell)

All the literature I consulted, including *The Handbook*, stated that adult Sabine's Gulls of both sexes have complete hoods in full summer plumage.

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P. J. Grant has commented as follows: 'Despite the implication that there may be a difference in head pattern between the sexes of Sabine's Gull, it is much more likely that hooded gulls can affect the extent of the hood by the attitude in which they hold their heads, altering the relative extension or contraction of their nape feathers.' Eds

**Herring Gulls obtaining mussels by flight-plunging and submerging** Although flight-plunging and submerging by gulls *Larus* is well known (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 36: 59; 37: 79; 42: 222; 52: 93-94, 198), the following seems worth recording since it involved a large number of individuals. On 27th November 1976, on an ebbing tide at St Ives, Cornwall, I noticed about 70 adult and immature Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* feeding at a shallow, seaweed-covered rock-bed containing a large colony of blackish mussels *Mytilus* about the size of the palm of a man's hand. They were flying up from the sea to heights of 2-3 m, then plummeting head first, with wings partly open, at angles of 80-90 degrees. They sometimes 'rebounded' from the surface or immersed their heads, but equally often submerged completely for three or four seconds, reaching the mussels by upending or diving to the bottom. The gulls seldom retained the slippery shells in their bills for very long; when attacked, those with food escaped by taking flight, but they invariably dropped the mussels, which were immediately caught by other gulls in flight. A few Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* waited to snatch edible items from the Herring Gulls. In 20 minutes, at least 100 mussels were obtained, the