

## Note

### Use of Garbage Dump and Possible Migration Route of Caspian Tern in Central Ontario

On 16 June 1985, Doug McRae, Mike Runtz and I observed a Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) flying over the Lindsay sewage lagoons, Victoria County. At the time, we remarked to one another that both the date and location seemed unusual because most Caspian Terns should be on their breeding grounds in mid-June.

On 23 July 1985, I observed eight adult Caspian Terns loafing with approximately 200 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) at the Lindsay garbage dump. The dump is located adjacent to the sewage ponds and is about 1.5 km east of the south end of Sturgeon Lake, Victoria County. The location of the dump and lagoons is described by Goodwin (1982).

At 1600h on 8 August 1985, four adult Caspian Terns were observed resting at the dump with several hundred Ring-billed Gulls and a small number of Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*). The day was sunny and hot. The terns had their bills open and were panting. As with the previous observation, the terns formed a loose group among the gulls.

At 1545h on 16 August 1985, one adult Caspian Tern was sitting at the dump among approximately 1000 gulls (mostly Ring-billed) when another adult tern flew in from the direction of Sturgeon Lake and landed near the first.

I was not able to check the dump as frequently in 1986.

However, on 31 July I observed 13 Caspian Terns, including one in juvenal plumage, resting with the gulls at the dump.

I believe these observations are significant for two reasons. First, the terns were using a garbage dump as a loafing site and second, the numbers observed (eight on 23 July 1985 and 13 on 31 July 1986) are high for a location away from the Great Lakes, possibly indicating a migration route between Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario.

The Caspian Tern is decidedly rare in most of central Ontario away from the Great Lakes. I recorded just one in Haliburton County during the period from 1980 to 1986. Sadler (1983) cites only 14 sightings for adjoining Peterborough County and he considers it "a rare wanderer . . . from small nesting colonies on the Great Lakes". In a few areas, however, the Caspian Tern appears to be locally common. Calvert (1925) reports that the Caspian Tern was a "frequent fall migrant on Sturgeon Lake", but he lists no numbers or dates. Tozer and Richards (1974) consider it to be "a fairly common transient . . . and post-breeding summer resident" in the Oshawa—Lake Scugog region. The origin of some of these terns is suggested by a juvenal found dead on 10 August 1968 at Lake Scugog which had been banded earlier in the summer as a chick near

Halfmoon Island (Parry Sound District), Georgian Bay. The evidence presented here suggests a post-breeding migration route from nesting colonies on Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario via Sturgeon Lake and Lake Scugog.

Although the Caspian Terns were not observed foraging for food at the dump, this behaviour might not be totally unexpected. Cunningham (1966) reports a Caspian Tern feeding upon carrion on a road in Florida. It appears that the Caspian Terns at Lindsay were using the dump for resting and loafing because of the proximity of the dump to Sturgeon Lake and this tern's strong inclination to associate with the Ring-billed Gull. Caspian Terns have also been observed sitting in fields with gulls (Tozer and Richards 1974; Geoff Carpentier, pers. comm., 1986). However, other than nesting on man-made peninsulas such as the Leslie Street Spit on Lake Ontario near Toronto, Regional Municipality of York, Caspian Terns rarely use man-made habitats. I am unaware

of any reports in the literature of Caspian Terns using a garbage dump.

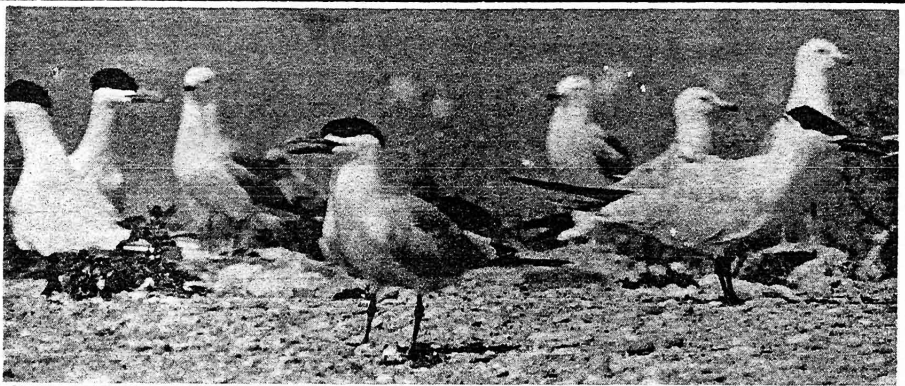
#### Acknowledgements

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#### Literature Cited

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Caspian Terns and Ring-billed Gulls / photo by D.M. Fraser.