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Least Terns Nest at Dry Tortugas

As late as the mid-1930's, several hundred pairs of Least Terns (*Sterna albifrons*) bred annually at Dry Tortugas. Thereafter their numbers dwindled rapidly, despite protection, with the last known breeding (one nest on Bush Key) reported in 1949 (see Robertson, 1964. *Bull. Fla. State Mus.*, 8:73-75, for history of the population). More recently, Least Terns have become rare at Dry Tortugas in any season and most of the few seen appear to be transients. From 1963 to date, we know of 10 reports in spring (12 April-25 May) by various observers and one in fall, on the late date of 12 October (Mrs. F.E. O'Brien, 1972). Except for a group of 6 on Garden Key, 12 April 1972, all these observations were of lone adults. For the decade prior to 1973, several weeks of field work annually in June and July produced only two observations of Least Terns. On 8 June 1966, several hours after the center of hurricane Alma crossed directly over Dry Tortugas, C.R. Mason and N.D. Steffee saw 8 adults on Garden Key, and W.B. Robertson saw one there the next day. These birds may have been transported to the area in the eye of the storm. On 3 July 1970, members of that year's tern-banding party found 2 adult Least Terns on East Key, but saw nothing to suggest that they were nesting. Also a long-dead Least Tern was found on Loggerhead Key, 30 June 1970, and the skeleton preserved (G.E.W. No. 4445).

On 1 July 1973, as members of the tern-banding party landed on Middle Key, Dry Tortugas, they saw 4 adult-plumaged Least Terns and one fledged juvenile in the company of 8 adult-plumaged Roseate Terns, *Sterna dougallii*. Search of the island, a barren sand bank with only a small area above high tide, revealed 2 Least Tern nests, one with 2 eggs and the other with one egg, and 4 Roseate nests, each with 2 eggs. We also found an apparently abandoned Least Tern nest with one egg and saw about 15 Roseate eggs, presumably from nests washed out by tides, in the lines of wrack along the beaches. At our next visit on 5 July, we did not see the

juvenile Least Tern, but found the same number of adult-plumaged Least and Roseates. The two Least Tern nests contained the same number of eggs as before and were being closely attended by adults. One clutch of Roseate eggs had disappeared and the other 3 nests of Roseates now held one egg each.

We have no later information on this nesting, but it is of interest that Least Terns have again attempted to nest at Dry Tortugas after an absence of almost 25 years. We have deposited two photographs of the two-egg Least Tern nest (courtesy of Marsha L. Winegarner) at Everglades National Park to document the record. *Glen E. Woolfenden, Dept. of Biology, Univ. of South Florida, Tampa, Fla. 33620, and William B. Robertson, Jr., Everglades National Park, Homestead, Fla. 33030.*

Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Florida

The Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) was first reported in the Western Hemisphere during the early 1930's from along the coasts of the mid-Atlantic states. Since then records of the species from North America have increased dramatically, and now the bird is known from eastern Canada and the Great Lakes region in the North to Texas and Florida in the South. We obtained the first Florida specimen (GEW 4440) on 22 February 1971 along the Courtney-Campbell Causeway in Hillsborough County. It is a male in adult plumage, weighing 938 g with moderate fat. It proved to be of the western European race, *L.f. graellsii*, which, as far as we know, is the only subspecies known to occur in the Western Hemisphere. Our identification was corroborated by Eugene Eisenmann with use of specimens at the American Museum of Natural History. All other North American records of this species known to us also are of adult-plumaged individuals, even though immature gulls typically wander farther than older birds. Most likely this is the case also for the Lesser Black-backed Gull, but immatures probably are overlooked because they are virtually indistinguishable from immature Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*).

Only one sighting of the Lesser Black-backed Gull existed for Florida prior to the 1970's, a bird observed by Alexander Sprunt, Jr., and others at Key West in 1938. Wisely it was relegated to the Hypothetical List in the absence of a voucher specimen (Sprunt, 1954. Florida Bird Life. Coward-McCann, Inc., New York City). Six sight records have been published since our collection of the first specimen (*American Birds*, vols. 25-27): one from McKay Bay, Tampa; 3 in the Florida Keys; one at Cape Canaveral; and one at Marco Island. The Marco sighting occurred in early May, but all others are from mid-October to early March, including two instances of apparently the same individual remaining at the same locality all winter. To our knowledge no great increase in experienced observers has taken place