

**First nesting of the Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) in Ontario and in the New World.**—The Little Gull is an annual companion of the Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*) in southern Ontario, spring and fall. It was first found in this region at Port Stanley, Ontario, on Lake Erie, by the late Dr. W. E. Saunders on 16 November 1930, and has since become an annual visitor with increasing frequency on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, several often being present among the flocks of migrating Bonaparte's Gulls.

At Oshawa (at a habitat locally called the "second marsh"), on Lake Ontario east of Toronto, I identified my first Little Gulls on 5 May 1957 (two adults), and I found another adult on 24 May 1959. In 1960, one adult and two immatures were present from 29 May to mid-June. In 1961, I saw an immature from 20 May to 25 June and, on 22 May, three adults also. Then, in 1962, two adults appeared on 6 May and on 13 May there were five adults and one immature present in the marsh. On all occasions, Bonaparte's Gulls were in close association with them. On 20 May the five adults were still present and I noticed during the next few days that they seemed to favor a certain section of the big watery marsh.

Suspicious that they might be nesting, I rowed out into the marsh on 1 June and found three nests, containing one, two, and three eggs, respectively. With Jake Laird, a photographer from Bowmanville, Ontario, I revisited the marsh on the 3rd, and we found that each nest contained three eggs. Mr. Laird obtained colored photographs (slides) of them and of the general habitat, and I took an egg from one of the nests for my collection. Only 5 adults and 1 immature Little Gull were noted before the nests were located. Six adults and 2 fully grown immatures were around the nesting area.

The nests were built in the marsh in about two feet of water, at the edge of the growth of cat-tails (*Typha*) where there was a light growth of bur-reeds (*Sparganium androcladum*). They were floating masses of cat-tail leaves, somewhat like nests of the Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), but built up higher above the surface, larger, and with more rim. They were all located within an area not more than 50 feet (about 15 meters) long. A Black Tern's nest, with eggs, nearby, offered an excellent standard of comparison. The Little Gulls' eggs were darker in color, more ovate in shape, much larger, and were blotched and spotted with darker shades of brown.

On our visits on 1 and 3 June, the three pairs of adult Little Gulls by then present were flying around the vicinity of the nests, uttering their *kek, kek* alarm notes as they swooped over our boat. The two fully-grown immature birds were among them, making eight birds in all.

On 11 June, in response to my telephone call, James L. Baillie and F. H. Emery of the Royal Ontario Museum arrived and rowed with me out into the marsh to see the nests. Mr. Baillie collected a male adult (length, 300 mm; extent of wings, 690 mm; weight, 120 g) which had enlarged testes. He took also one egg from the same nest as my egg. Mr. Baillie's egg was half incubated, and measured 40 X 31 mm. Another egg was left in the nest. The other two nests contained three and two eggs respectively, one egg being missing from one of them. The adults were flying around in an agitated state at our approach. No immatures were seen on that date.

I made another visit to the vicinity of the nests on 17 June, when one adult several times carried nesting material to the area. On 20 June I checked to see if any eggs had hatched, and found that, although one nest still had three eggs and another one egg, the third nest was broken up with its two eggs floating on the water nearby. These were taken for the Royal Ontario Museum but only one could be preserved. The set of three eggs was warm and the agitated parents appeared to be in attend-

ance. On 22 June, all the eggs were in the water and had small holes in them, perhaps tooth marks, were putrid, and broke when handled. One pair of adults was in the vicinity as well as the two immatures, but none was seen in the marsh after this date. I think muskrats or mink destroyed the nests.

On 8 June 1963 another nest, containing three eggs, was found in the same locality. It could not be adequately followed up, but a check on 14 July suggests that this nest also failed.—GEORGE A. SCOTT, 282 Bloor Street West, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada.

**Skimmer-like behavior in the Royal and Caspian terns.**—The feeding method of the Black Skimmer (*Rynchops nigra*), wherein the bird drags the lower mandible just beneath the surface of shallow, quiet water, is well known and often mentioned. I had thought this maneuver to be unique with the Rynchopidae, like the specialized morphology of the family, and was, therefore, surprised when I saw a Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) drop close to the water surface, shorten and quicken the wing beat, and push the lower mandible just below the water surface, precisely as a skimmer does.

After first noticing this behavior, in the summer of 1961, I paid more careful attention to the activities of the nonbreeding flock, often numbering a thousand or more, of various terns that spend much time feeding young and "loafing" on the north beach of Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia. The Caspian Tern was seen skimming twice, and the Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) was seen skimming numerous times. The latter species outnumbered the former by about 100 to 1 in the summer and fall of 1962, although the Caspian Tern is quite numerous a few miles away. I have not noted skimming in several other species of terns in the same locality.

In the maximum performance, the lower mandible may leave a track on the water for 30 or 40 feet. Skimming usually occurs a little distance off shore, and not in the shallow water close to shore. It has been watched from various angles and in excellent light. There is no evidence that the terns have obtained food by skimming.

The fact that the morphology of these birds allows this behavior seems interesting (here see the extensive work of R. Zusi, *Nuttall Orn. Cl., Publ. 3*, 101 pp., 1962), and the behavior is an additional suggestion of phylogenetic relationship between the Sterninae and the Rynchopidae.—IVAN R. TOMKINS, 1231 East 50th Street, Savannah, Georgia.

**Yellow-headed Blackbirds at sea in the Atlantic Ocean.**—On 30 August 1962, while on board the Queen Elizabeth bound for Europe I saw many migrating birds.

We had sailed the evening before and the following morning were about 350 miles northeast of New York (approximately 43° N 68° W). The wind was moderate from the southeast, the weather overcast and rather foggy.

Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) were numerous. A single Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), a number of small dark finches (not identifiable), and several Orchard Orioles (*Icterus spurius*) were observed on the rigging. Also, very much to my surprise, about 30 Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) were present. They flew very close to the ship, not more than 30 feet away (10 meters), and I was able to see them clearly through 7 power field glasses. They remained with us for about an hour. There are few records for this species from eastern North America, much less at sea in the Atlantic.—R. M. DE SCHAUENSEE, *Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania*.