

RECOVERIES OF COMMON TERNS BANDED  
AT CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

BY CHARLES B. FLOYD

It is interesting to record at this time the recoveries secured to date from seventeen thousand Common and Roseate Terns (*Sterna hirundo* and *Sterna dougalli*) banded at Tern Island, Chatham, Massachusetts, from 1924 to 1928 inclusive. Of the above number, the great majority are Common Terns, and this report is confined to this species only, as no recoveries have been received as yet of the other species. Twenty-one recoveries are reported from points in the United States and Canada, and twelve recoveries are from lands bordering on the Caribbean Sea, all young-of-the-year when banded. The fact that only thirty-three recoveries have been made from seventeen thousand banded birds shows the need of banding many thousands more before satisfactory data can be obtained concerning the migrations of this species.

The twenty birds recovered in the United States can be divided into two groups. The first contains those taken at points near the place of banding before the fall migration had begun and during the period of wandering. Terns were recovered at the following places in Massachusetts: Wellfleet (two), Lynn, Provincetown (two), Race Point, Chathamport (two), Scituate (two), and Truro. The following were secured well north of the home island:

No. 552209, banded July 7, 1928, and recovered at Monhegan, Maine, July 28, 1928.

No. 550828, banded July 8, 1928, and recovered at Washington, Maine, August 7, 1928.

No. 677324, banded July 7, 1928, and recovered "midway between Windsor, Nova Scotia, and New York, probably off the Massachusetts coast," on September 27, 1928.

No. 404509, banded July 16, 1926, for some reason did not move south with the others and was picked up exhausted (dying the next day) at West Dennis (next town to Chatham) on November 6, 1926.

The following recoveries show the Terns on their migration journey:

No. 550398, banded July 3, 1928, recovered at Mantaloking, New Jersey, August 29, 1928.

No. 551580, banded July 1, 1928, recovered at Smithtown, Long Island, New York, August 31, 1928.

No. 674020, banded July 1, 1928, recovered at Richmond, Virginia, September 20, 1928.

No. 677872, banded July 7, 1928, recovered at Neptune, New Jersey, October 5, 1928.

One record appears of a westerly migration and is that of number 434325 banded at Chatham on July 7, 1926, and recovered August 18, 1928, at Conway Grove, two miles east of Rondeau Provincial Park, Lake Erie, Ontario.

The following eight records are of birds secured on the wintering-grounds of the species:

No. 676305, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 5, 1928, and recovered at Mayaguez, Porto Rico, on September 14, 1928.

No. 678732, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, on July 10, 1928, and recovered near Haina, Santo Domingo, on September 15, 1928.

No. 675752, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 3, 1928, and recovered at Altamira Puerto-Plata, Santo Domingo, on September 23, 1928.

No. 678193, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 9, 1928, and recovered at Cape Haitien, Haiti, on September 27, 1928.

No. 676184, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 5, 1928, and recovered at Carupano, Venezuela, South America, on October 10, 1928.

No. 551819, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 6, 1928, and recovered at Blanchisseuse, Trinidad, British West Indies, on October 25, 1928.

No. 676552, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 6, 1928, and recovered at Carupano, Venezuela, South America, on November 23, 1928.

No. 674423, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 1, 1928, and recovered at Rio Guajara near Para, Brazil, South America, December 13, 1928.

It is evident from the foregoing records that the migration is a straggling one, for on October 5th there is a record of a Tern in New Jersey, and on the 10th a bird was taken in Venezuela, South America. On September 14th a recovery was made in Porto Rico; on the 20th, one in Virginia; and on the 26th, one on the island of Haiti.

Four records now follow of recoveries made during May and June of Terns on the species' wintering-grounds, birds which were banded the previous July. At this time of the year these birds theoretically should be very near or actually on their nesting-grounds, hundreds of miles north.

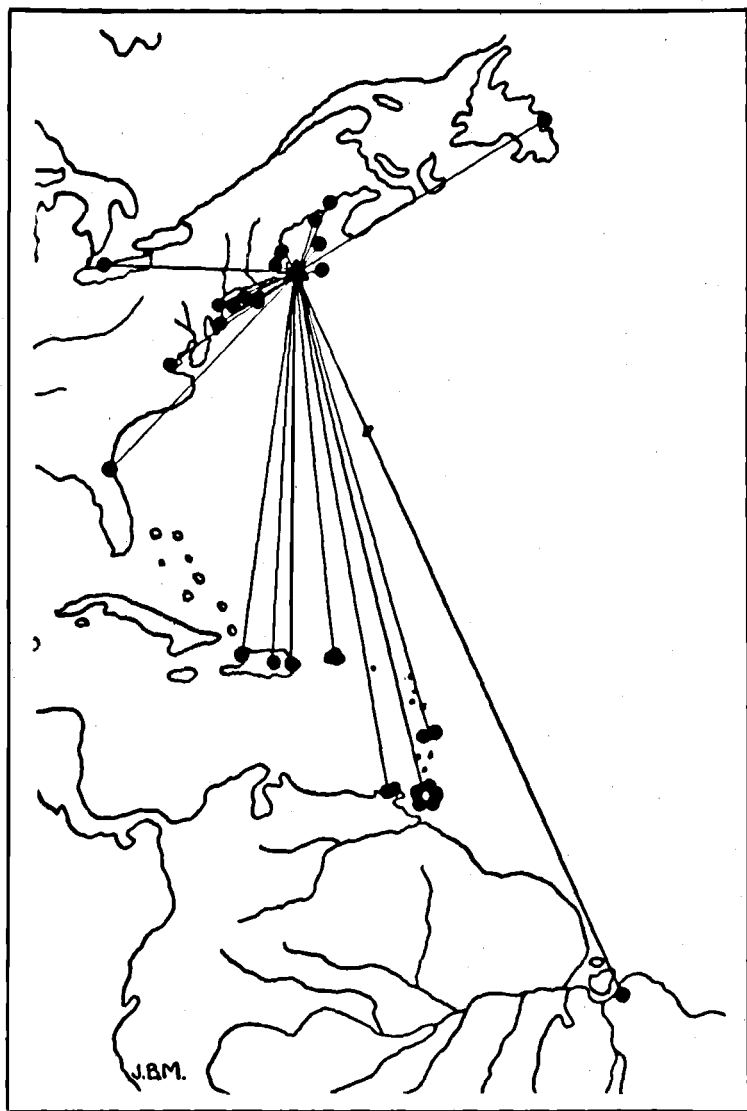
No. 403458, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 12, 1926, and recovered at Erin Beach, Erin, Trinidad, British West Indies, on May 10, 1927.

No. 433295, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 6, 1926, and recovered at Black River, Moruga, Trinidad, British West Indies, on May 28, 1927.

No. 404034, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 13, 1926, and recovered in Salyera, Trinidad, British West Indies, on June 7, 1927.

No. 435207, banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, July 8, 1926, and recovered in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, British West Indies, on June 10, 1927.

These recoveries so far from the birthplace of the birds give



MAP SHOWING PLACE OF BANDING AND  
RECOVERY LOCATIONS OF COMMON TERNS

some support to the theory that this species does not breed during the first year, but on the other hand these birds may have been breeding on their wintering-grounds, for according to Bent<sup>1</sup> and Forbush<sup>2</sup> Common Terns do breed occasionally on the coast of Venezuela.

During the summer of 1928 one hundred and sixty-five adult Terns were trapped on their nests at Tern Island. Included in this number were five which were two or three years old. While these recoveries are too few to have any real significance, they do give some slight support, subject to later "quantity trapping," to the theory that the Common Tern does not breed during the second summer, or that they do not return to the place of banding during the second summer.

On the other hand, the following recovery should not be overlooked. No. 384216 was banded at Chatham, Massachusetts, on July 14, 1925, and was recovered at the height of the breeding-season near the extreme northern limit of the species' breeding-range along the Atlantic Coast, at Little Fogo Island, Newfoundland, a year later almost to the exact day of banding. From facts gathered to date, the question of whether the Common Tern breeds the year after hatching is entirely a matter of conjecture, and it is the writer's hope to settle the question next year through an extensive trapping of banded nesting birds.

While the above records do not contain all the information desired, they suggest interesting possibilities.

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## SYSTEMATIC ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD-BANDING

BY JAMES L. PETERS

SYSTEMATIC ornithology, as generally understood, consists largely of the classification of birds; that is, *first*, the grouping into orders, families, and genera, and attempting to arrange these groups, the smaller within the larger, in an orderly sequence that best expresses their relationships; *second*, distribution of the various groups, and the refinement of the species, *i.e.* breaking the species into geographical units or subspecies;

<sup>1</sup> Bent, A. C., Bulletin 113 U. S. National Museum, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Forbush, E. H., Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States, Vol. 1, p. 107.