

In the other Passerine birds the molt of which I have studied there is a close conformity to the method that I have given for the Bobolink. In most of the species there is no molt of the flight feathers in the young of the year. Just which species do molt all of the plumage is a topic for study.

I was surprised to find that while the Gray Ruffed Grouse shed its feathers rapidly the order of shedding was much the same as that of the Passerine birds. Likewise, the Mourning Dove had much the same order of molt, but its progress was so slow that a new feather was fully half grown before the one next to it was shed. The Killdeer did not show material differences in the order of molt.

It is well known that some ducks and gallinaceous birds shed their feathers so rapidly that they are practically naked and unable to fly for some days. The woodpeckers shed the middle pair of tail feathers last, and the Kingfisher has his own method.

As I have suggested above, study of the molting of birds can and ought to be a regular part of the bird bander's privilege. Many birds have partial molts at various times in the year. It would be well if every bird banded were examined for the purpose of determining whether or not it showed evidences of molt.

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### BREEDING OF THE LEAST TERN IN IOWA

BY WILLIAM YOUNGWORTH

The Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) has been observed in the Sioux City region quite regularly by various persons during the summer months in recent years—perhaps for the last twenty years, at least. It usually appears during the last week of May, and remains often throughout August. There has been some local discussion from time to time as to the probability of the birds breeding here.

In 1885 Agersborg (*Auk*, II, page 289), writing on "The Birds of Southeastern South Dakota", and dealing with Clay, Yankton, and Union Counties, says of the Least Tern, "Summer resident; breeds".

W. W. Cooke, in 1888 ("Bird Migration in the Mississippi Valley", page 58), perhaps with the preceding report in mind, makes the following statement concerning this bird: "Chiefly coastwise, but passes up the Mississippi Valley to Dakota and Minnesota. Breeds abundantly along the Gulf coast in Louisiana and Texas; also in the interior; known to breed in Kansas and Dakota".

In 1915 Dr. Visher (WILSON BULLETIN, XXVII, page 324) refers to the same species as follows: "This interesting bird has nested regularly for many years along the Vermilion River, near the town of Vermilion, and also at the mouth of the stream, a few miles away. Nests have been found on several occasions. The colonies are small, consisting of not more than seven or eight pairs."

For several seasons Least Terns have been summer residents at a small lake within the city limits of Sioux City, Iowa. This particular lake is without islands or other suitable nesting sites, and the writer felt for a time that the birds were non-breeding birds.

The yearly return of the Least Terns in 1929 came on May 19, and from that date the birds were closely watched. A large sandbar in the Missouri River about one-half a mile from the lake, was discovered to be their home. During the early summer the adults began to carry minnows to this bar, to feed the young birds. It was noted that very little food was collected from the river, as this small lake apparently furnished an abundance of fish for both the young and adults.

On August 7 we heard a sort of begging call, and soon two young Least Terns were seen flying after some adults. They were guiding the youngsters to this fine feeding ground. These young terns were very awkward on the wing and their numerous clumsy dives were interesting to watch. The old birds brought several more fledglings from the river and soon all the young were resting on the water. The parents would fly to the young, alight on the water, and proceed to feed them with small fish.

The young terns, with their stubby tails, rather short full wings, and plump appearing bodies represented quite a contrast to their slender and graceful, winged parents. The hunt for food was over and as the sun slid behind the huge packing plants, which border little Half Moon Lake, the terns, young and old, arose in a loose flock and flew to their favorite sandbar for the night.

SIoux CITY, IOWA.

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## BREEDING OF THE LEAST TERN ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

BY ALBERT F. GANIER

I first became acquainted with the Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) on the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, Miss., where it is fairly common and well distributed. Upon its arrival in the spring it may be seen in flocks of from six to fifty, skimming the muddy waters in search of food or, for variety, repairing to the shallow sloughs, "old rivers", and barrow pits behind the levees. While it is untiring in