

COMMON TERNS NESTING NEAR TOLEDO, OHIO

BY LOUIS W. CAMPBELL

Little Cedar Point, Lucas County, is the tip of a peninsula ten miles northeast of Toledo extending one and a half miles north into Lake Erie. This peninsula, forming the dividing line between the Lake and Maumee Bay on the south side, consists of marsh land with a higher border of sand beach. As this marsh is owned by a hunting club, and is not open to the public, the point itself is accessible only by water. The writer, however, received permission to cross the hunting club grounds and all trips to the Point were made on foot. Little Cedar Point consists roughly of a sandbar 1500 feet long and 250 feet wide. About 1000 feet from the end of this bar is a narrower place through which the lake storms at times cut a channel approximately 100 feet wide, in which the water is from a few inches to three feet in depth depending on the direction of the wind. This year, because of high lake levels and northeast winds, this channel was open from April to August, cutting off the end of the point from the mainland. Half-way between this cut and the end of the bar is a small house in which fishermen dwell most of the year.

On June 9, 1929, there were about fifty Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) at the Point. Seeing that quite a few were performing their mating antics, I determined to revisit the location at a later date. Returning on June 20, I was surprised to find the number of terns increased to 500 with 200 or more sets of eggs, all located near the end of the sandbar. July 7 found the eggs unhatched, but on August 4 there were fifty-five young, in all stages from tiny chicks just out of the egg to juveniles barely able to fly. A number of eggs had been destroyed by the severe storm of July 19. On August 10 many young birds were still unable to fly but no newly hatched ones were seen. By September 2 all were at home in the air.

The nesting of this little colony of Common Terns is probably the first record for the mainland of the state of Ohio, although, as I have shown, the site was technically an island at the time. With regard to the distribution of the species in this district, Professor Lynds Jones in his "Birds of Cedar Point and Vicinity" (1910), states, "The only breeding places thus far discovered are upon Big and Little Chicken Islands and upon the reef of Chick when it is sufficiently uncovered by water; upon North Harbor, Starve Island, the gravel ridge at the west end of Middle and over the top of the Rattle of Rattlesnake Island." Of these, only Starve Island and Rattlesnake Island are within the boundary of the United States.

Whether or not the Common Terns have ever nested previously at the Little Cedar Point, I, personally, am unable to say, as this is the first year I have had access to the place. An old fisherman, told me, however, that there had been a colony once before, "many years ago" during a period of high water. The most obvious explanation of this year's nesting would be that the high lake levels had cut down the usual breeding areas and driven the birds to new locations. Another fact that would seem to show that the terns were desperately in need of a nesting site is that the fishing shack, inhabited by several men, was within 300 feet of the nearest nest. These fishermen pulled their nets daily and their boats plied back and forth to the city of Toledo. When one considers the inherent shyness of colony-nesting birds, the courage of this group is worthy of note.

TOLEDO, OHIO.

A LETTER FROM ROBERT RIDGWAY

BY FRANK L. BURNS

The following letter from Robert Ridgway, written so short a time before his death, contains some information that will be of general interest; and it is with the thought of sharing this information with the many admirers of Mr. Ridgway that I offer the letter for publication.

LARCHMOUNT

1030 South Morgan Street

OLNEY, ILLINOIS

December 31, 1928.

Mr. Frank L. Burns,
Berwyn, Pennsylvania,

My dear Mr. Burns:

In reply to your inquiry of the 28th inst., just received, I have to say that it is impossible for me to forecast the appearance of the two as yet unpublished volumes of "Birds of North and Middle America." My work on Part 9 has been completed for some two or three years, and in the preparation of Part 10, the concluding volume, I am now on the home stretch. If my health and strength hold out this should be completed by the end of next summer, at the farthest. I think it is not fully realized by most people who are interested that the labor of preparing this book is becoming more difficult each year. This is caused mainly by the enormous increase in ornithological literature, all of which has to be studied and bibliographical refer-