

Nesting of the Least Tern in Illinois.—Although the Least Tern (*Sterna albi-frons*) has been known to nest in Illinois since late in the nineteenth century, published reports of its nesting are few. Ridgway believed that the bird nested somewhere in the state but knew of no certain breeding records (1895. "The Ornithology of Illinois," *Ill. Lab. Nat. Hist. Rep.* 1:248). Apparently the first actual record of the bird nesting in Illinois is that of Widmann (1898. *Auk*, 15:27) who found a colony on Gabaret Island in the Mississippi River near St. Louis, Missouri. Widmann noted the late nesting of the species, reporting that young were begging for food in late August, and explained it on the basis of high water in early summer.

On August 1, 1907, Bartsch (1922. *Auk*, 39:101) found adult Least Terns feeding young birds on a peninsula known as Bird Point on the north bank of the Ohio at its confluence with the Mississippi. However, Ganier (1930. *Wilson Bull.*, 42:107) has suggested that, since young birds are often fed for some time after the colony's departure from the ternery, the authenticity of this report as a breeding record is doubtful.

On July 12, 1952, Richard Anderson (personal communication) found two downy young, which he estimated to be two or three days old, on Mosenthein Island, a large island with a sand beach 50 to 100 yards wide. Anderson saw four adult birds at the island as well as the young, but saw no other immature birds, eggs, or nest hollows. Mosenthein Island is opposite north St. Louis, directly west of Gabaret Island.

Anderson found no nesting terns in this locality the summer of 1953, apparently because logging made the island unsuitable for the birds. At Horseshoe Lake, about two miles east of the river, however, Anderson and others found small groups of Least Terns feeding during July. Near the middle of August, on a grassy mudflat close to where the earlier observations had been made, young birds capable of flight were found being fed by adults. These records suggest that a colony may have been near at hand.

On July 5, 1952, investigating a report by Esther Bennett (personal communication to William Hardy) of terns, not certainly identified as to species, on a sandbar in the Ohio River, Hardy and I found a colony of Least Terns two miles north of Shawneetown, Illinois, on a sandbar about four miles long and at its widest point one mile wide. Although completely surrounded by water for a few weeks during spring, for most of the year the sandbar is at least narrowly connected with the mainland and is to be regarded as a part of Illinois. Elongated and irregular in form, the peninsula consists of elevated central portions thickly grown with sandbar willow (*Salix interior*), black willow (*Salix nigra*), and cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and of peripheral and interdigitated beaches of sand and pebbles. The tern colony was located on the largest beach, which makes up the downstream one-quarter of the peninsula.

Here in an area about 50 by 100 yards we found three nests. One nest contained two young and each of the others contained two young and one egg. All nests were on the pebble portions of the beach. Numerous adults which had been resting on the bar arose, some apparently with reluctance, when we came into view. Most of them remained near-by, flying about and calling for the duration of our visit. Although some birds flew low, none attempted to attack us.

The number of adults present was estimated to be about 55. Assuming that there were few or no nonbreeding birds in the group, as Palmer (1941. *Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist.*, 42:106) has found to be the case with colonies of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), some 25 or 30 pairs were present. A study of the colony during the 1953 nesting season revealed about thirty nests. The 1953 investigations will be described fully in a nesting study of the Interior Least Tern (*S. a. athalassos*) being prepared by William Hardy.—RICHARD BREWER, 1506 Edith Street, Murphysboro, Illinois, January 31, 1954.