

saltatrix) in areas near Great Gull Island reports (pers. comm.) his impression that 1966 was a good year for bait fish, in 1967 bait fish were very low and in 1968 they were more abundant. Bluefish and terns are often seen feeding in the same areas, the fish chasing the bait to the surface where the terns dive for it.

Since pirating of fish by Common Terns seems to be exceptional in the Great Gull Island colony, its occurrence may have been correlated with a shortage of bait fish. Where pirating is seen regularly, as described for the Farne Islands Roseate Terns the pattern may have had its beginning during a period when bait fish were in short supply.—HELEN HAYS, 14 East 95th Street, New York, New York 10028, 5 March 1969.

Sand-kicking camouflages young Black Skimmers.—Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull., 113:315, 1921) describes young Black Skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*) digging themselves into depressions on the beach when disturbed. "From their earliest stage the young skimmers have a habit of scratching themselves into a hollow and lying absolutely flat upon the shell-covered beach. While this habit is displayed mostly by the downy young, I have seen it exhibited to a great extent by the feathered young when the young birds are able to run about and danger threatens. Then they will throw themselves flat on the shells of the beach and scratch alternately with their little webbed feet backward. They make 15–20 movements before they snuggle down to rest, and while their legs are in action they make the shells fly most energetically. When the hollow is dug sufficiently to allow them to lie flush with the surrounding beach they remain absolutely motionless. . ." Stone (Bird studies at old Cape May, II:604, 1937) mentions the difficulty of seeing young skimmers as they lay in depressions with sand apparently drifted around them.

On 7 August 1968 we visited a sand bar in Shinnecock Bay at the eastern end of Long Island, New York, where terns and skimmers nest. As we walked into the colony we saw spurts of sand ahead of us. As we approached the sand stopped flying and there would be a young skimmer lying very still, partially covered with sand.

On 27 August 1968 we visited a section of beach about one mile south of Stone Harbor, New Jersey where skimmers were nesting. We found a nest where one egg had hatched and two eggs were still left in the nest. The young skimmer, which looked at most a day old, was still kicking sand into the air as we stood over it. The sand fell on the back of the bird.

The sand-kicking as Bent suggests does function in digging a depression in which the bird lies. It seemed to us equally important, however, that the sand which is kicked into the air falls on the back of the young skimmer partially covering it, and from our point of view, at least, helping to camouflage it. It seems likely that Stone's drifted sand could have been sand kicked by the young skimmers. The camouflage aspect of this kicking may not be realized if the substrate is composed of small stones, or shells, which the young skimmer could not easily kick into the air.

Conway and Bell (Living Bird, 7:57–70, 1968) describe Kittlitz Sandpipers (*Charadrius pecuarius*) kicking sand over their eggs when disturbed. We have not found any reference which suggests the camouflage function for sand-kicking in young skimmers, but feel it is applicable.—HELEN HAYS, 14 East 95th Street, New York, New York 10028, AND GRACE DONALDSON, Department of Education, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, New York 10024, 27 February 1969.