



## FIRST RECORDS OF LEAST TERN, *STERNA ANTILLARUM*, FOR PERU

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The Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) breeds along the Pacific coast of North America from California south to southern Mexico, locally in the interior of the eastern United States, and along the Atlantic coast from Maine south to Venezuela. Although the wintering ranges of most populations are not well-known, the species is thought to winter in western Mexico and the Caribbean coast of South America (A. O. U., 1983). Bent (1921 : 279) said that the Least Tern winters « south, along the west coast to Peru (Sarayacu) ». Sarayacu is an Amazonian, not coastal, locality, and Bent's citation of this record is now regarded as a « mistake » (Hellmayr and Conover, 1948 : 323). There are no other previous records of Least Tern for Peru, or for any locality on the Pacific coast south of the Gulf of Panama (Blake, 1977). Here we report recent records of this species from three coastal localities in Peru.

Schulenberg (with P. L. Brown and M. D. Williams) saw a pair of Least Terns on 23 November 1978 along the Pan-American Highway 9 km south of Chimbote, Dpto. Ancash. These birds were seen perched and in flight over flooded fields at the edge of a small marsh ; their small size, white underparts, and yellow bills with a small black terminal spot were noted carefully.

Parker (with M. J. Braun, J. W. Eley, and M. B. Robbins) saw a single Least Tern on 24 May 1980 at Paracas Bay, Dpto. Ica. This bird was seen as close as 10 m, both at rest and in flight in association with several Peruvian Terns (*Sterna lorata*). The Least Tern, approximately the same size as the Peruvian Terns, was easily separable by its white underparts and yellow, black-tipped bill.

Hughes found two Least Terns over coastal freshwater lagoons at Mejia, Dpto. Arequipa, in December 1982. Schulenberg collected an adult female (LSUMZ 114064) at this locality on 10 July 1983. Hughes saw single individuals at Mejia on 26 September and 31 December 1983 ; two birds on 2 March 1984 ; single individuals on 3 July, 27 September, and 25 October 1984 ; and two birds on 21 February 1985.

Several authors (Friedmann *et al.*, 1950; Blake, 1977) have noted that the described subspecies of Least Tern can be difficult to distinguish, especially with birds not in full breeding plumage. The very dark gray color of the upperparts suggests that our specimen may belong to one of the subspecies of western Mexico. Two other features of this specimen (three outer primaries with dusky outer webs, and greatly reduced amount of black at the tip of the bill) were regarded by Brodkorb (1940) as attributes of *Sterna antillarum mexicana*, the breeding subspecies of Sonora and Sinaloa. The measurement of the exposed culmen of this specimen (26.8 mm), however, falls outside the upper limit of that form (van Rossem and Hachisuka, 1937). The subspecies of Least Tern from western Mexico (*mexicana* and *staebleri*) are based on small series from scattered localities; it seems prudent to defer subspecific identification of the Peru specimen until the limits of variation of these forms are better understood.

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#### SAMENVATTING

De auteurs vermelden in deze nota de eerste waarnemingen van overwinterende Amerikaanse Dwergsterren (*Sterna antillarum*) uit Peru, in drie verschillende localiteiten langs de kust van de Stille Oceaan.

RESUME

Les auteurs mentionnent dans cette note les premières observations de Sternes naines (*Sterna antillarum*) hivernantes au Pérou, dans trois localités côtières différentes de l'océan Pacifique.

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