

NESTING OF TRUDEAU'S TERN AND
DESCRIPTION OF THE YOUNG.

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Two small nesting colonies of Trudeau's Tern (*Sterna trudeaui*) were visited by me during the latter part of November, 1928, and a record of my observations is here offered.

Both colonies were found near Lavalle (en Ajo) Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, from information given in Dr. Wetmore's 'Observations on the Birds of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chili' (pp. 137).

The first colony was observed at Laguna Milan, November 21. At our approach the Gulls, in whose company the Terns were nesting, and the Terns, arose from their nests and flew about us. The guide poled the canoe from shore through the paja out into the open water, which at that time was about four or five feet deep; however, so dense was the camalote (a variety of vegetation growing from the bottom of the laguna), that it often required our combined efforts to make any progress. There were many more Gulls than Terns, and contrary to the experience of Mr. A. H. Holland (Ibis, 1890, p. 428) the nests of the Terns were well distributed among those of the Gulls. They were scattered. As Trudeau's Tern may be easily distinguished at a distance from the Gulls by the pearly whiteness of its head, its trim shape and smaller size, most of the nests were found by looking for the sitting bird instead of for the nests.

All of the nests were composed of camalote and rested upon a mass of the same, which grew, as before stated, from the bottom of the laguna; some of them were nicely lined with broken sticks and twigs of durasnillo. Similar nesting conditions prevailed at Laguna La Bolsa, where a male bird in breeding plumage was secured on November 24. One of the nests held two young and one egg just hatching. The two young, although not more than a day old, left the nest as soon as they realized themselves discovered and tried to hide among the camalote. They did not swim, for they lacked the strength to make headway against the slight movement

of the water, caused by a light breeze, but they paddled and floated buoyantly, showing plainly that the spirit was willing, however weak was the flesh.

When taken in the hand these little fellows emitted a noise that can be well imitated by holding the tongue against the roof of the mouth and whispering the word *ship*.

The nesting colonies were on fresh water, which was inhabited by a species of fish locally known as "lissa," and it was upon the young of these that the Terns freely fed. The guide stated that a long red worm, found under the "juju cresco" in fresh water, shrimps from Piedras Laguna and other salt water bodies also furnished much of the Terns' food. Although this was not wholly verified it seemed very likely. Some dead caracols on shore attracted numerous flies and insects, and the Terns were feeding on the latter.

The isolation of the nesting grounds of this Tern is such that but few of the eggs have been taken, and there are very few records of collectors finding them. Perhaps the first is of three eggs collected by Mr. A. H. Holland, some time prior to 1890 (Ibis, *loc. cit.*). The late Mr. Ernest Gibson, F. Z. S., who had studied this interesting bird for a number of years, exhibited a few eggs before a meeting of the Zoological Society in London in 1891 (Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1891, p. 373). And there are seven eggs in the collection of Col. John E. Thayer, taken by Mr. Herbert Ozan on St. Ambrose Island, off the coast of Chile, on December 17, 1907 (Bent's Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns, p. 227). The nesting there was very different from what we found in Argentina.

No other records are known to the writer and we considered ourselves fortunate, therefore, when we obtained our specimens. There are eleven complete clutches in the series three of three eggs, four of two, and four of one. Two other nests contained one egg each, both fresh, making twenty-three eggs in all. The eggs of four clutches of one each, contained embryos well developed. In comparing this series of eggs with a series of eggs of Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) there seems but little appreciable difference in either size or coloration.

Mr. Harry S. Swarth, of the California Academy of Sciences, has kindly supplied me with the following description of the downy

young, heretofore unpublished, based upon a specimen given by me to the Academy.

Downy young (one day old). Ground color above rich brown, close to tawny-olive (Ridgway), marked with irregular black streaks and spots. These markings tend to form three stripes on the back, and a central cervical stripe with lateral spots on sides of neck and back of head. Anterior top of head, from eyes to nostril, immaculate. The brownish dorsal coloration extends (somewhat duller and grayer) over the wings, flanks, and lower abdomen. Cheeks (between bill and ears) dusky, a marking that extends, rather sharply defined, across the throat, separating the white chin and whitish breast. Lower breast grayish, merging into the brownish abdomen and flanks. "Eyes soft blue-black, almost indigo, showing great depth. Feet king's yellow (Winsor & Newton); claws black. Base of upper and lower mandible king's yellow (duller than feet), anterior half, black" (collector's field notes).

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