

nail, where parasites had been removed. I laid the note away and forgot it for a year, until on December 3, 1936, when between five and ten miles off Monterey, I saw the whole performance repeated once, though I could not catch the fish, and several time noticed gulls sitting close to the Sunfish without pecking it. Furthermore my friend, Mr. Frank Lloyd, who is daily at sea off Monterey, told me he had seen the same occurrence many times. The Sunfish lie motionless, as though appreciating this marine-cowbird function of the gulls.—T. T. McCABE, *Berkeley, California*.

Short-billed Gull in Massachusetts.—In the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy there is a skin of a gull that came with the Brewster collection. It was originally labelled *Larus delawarensis* ? and has been kept with the Ring-billed Gulls. While examining this bird recently, I was struck by its very small bill and some peculiarities of plumage not associated with *L. delawarensis*. Comparison of specimens quickly lead to its identification as some form of *Larus canus*. *L. c. kamtschatschensis* (Bonap.) is a much larger bird than this one and need not enter into consideration, but whether the bird should be referred to true *L. canus* or to *L. canus brachyrhynchus* is not so easy to decide. The bird is in a transition plumage between the 'first nuptial' and 'second winter' and cannot be quite matched by available specimens of either race; the streaking on the top of the head, however, is much heavier than in western European examples and for this reason should, I think, be referred to *L. c. brachyrhynchus* of western North America.

The specimen in question, a female, was shot at Pleasant Bay, Chatham, Massachusetts, February 8, 1908, by N. A. Eldredge. It was acquired by Charles J. Paine, Jr., who gave it to William Brewster about a year later. It now bears the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy number 248,842. In the Brewster catalogue is the following entry in the 'remarks' column in Brewster's own hand: "Bill small for *delawarensis*; bird may be *canus* or *brachyrhynchus*!"—JAMES L. PETERS, *Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass.*

Forster's Tern on the Niagara River.—Published reports, and indeed any form of record of the occurrence of Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) in the Niagara district seem sufficiently rare to warrant the following note. While travelling in company with Mr. F. W. Gregory from Niagara Falls, Ontario, to Fort Erie, via the Niagara River boulevard, on October 19, 1936, we saw among other Laridae, such as Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, and Bonaparte's Gulls, about one dozen terns in several small scattered parties. Although not by any means without precedent, the presence of terns on the river at this season was interesting. An opportunity for careful observation occurred at a point where Frenchman's Creek enters the Niagara River, and here a small party of terns was examined at very close range. Three immature, or completely winter-plumaged birds, were found to be definitely referable to the species *Sterna forsteri*. The diagnostic character of the white head, with elongated black patch through the eye only, was most plainly and repeatedly shown when the birds hovered with down-pointed bill, and dived within a dozen yards of the river bank. A fourth bird, more or less in company at the time with the Forster's Terns, was almost certainly an adult Common Tern changing into winter plumage with a whitish forehead and black cap extending over the back of the head. The several other small parties of terns seen hovering over the river, and diving, but not closely observed, may or may not have contained other examples of *Sterna forsteri*; but a rather distant glimpse of one small group of five birds, obtained while driving along the boulevard, left me with the impression that they were not all

of the common species, and that one at least was in all probability a Forster's Tern. The only other recent reports known to the writer of the occurrence of Forster's Tern on the Niagara frontier have appeared as records of single birds reported by the Buffalo Ornithological Society in their mimeographed journal, 'The Prothonotary.' One of these records, concerning a bird of this species seen at Fort Erie on September 21, 1935, has already been commented upon by the writer elsewhere (Sheppard, Hurlburt, and Dickson, 'A preliminary list of the birds of Lincoln and Welland Counties, Ontario,' *Canadian Field Nat.*, 50: 131, 1936), while the other relates to a more recent report of another single example, seen at Niagara Falls on September 16, 1936.—R. W. SHEPPARD, 1805 Mouland Avenue, Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Royal Tern in Massachusetts.—On June 21, 1936, I was studying straggling shore-birds on the great flats of Monomoy, south of Chatham, Cape Cod, and turned idly to examine a large group of terns and gulls of various species resting on the mud at the edge of the water. Looming up among the terns, I was astonished to see a larger tern with an all-red bill. It was at first supposed to be a Caspian Tern, but the bird was not large enough, the bill was too light and red, and above all not proportionately any deeper or stouter than those of the adjacent Common Terns. Also the tail was long and deeply forked, projecting way beyond the closed wings. On approaching closer to flush the bird, the best field character was positively noted, the lack of black or dusky on the under surface of the spread wing in flight; also the generally more slender build and more buoyant flight. The bird was obviously a Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) in full nuptial plumage, as the forehead was not white. There are but three records for the State, all in the month of July. With the great increase of this species on the south Atlantic coast in recent years, the Royal Tern should be expected farther north as a rare spring and summer straggler. Observers, therefore, should be on the lookout for it. The more important field characters have consequently been stressed in this note. The wing character is omitted in practically all standard text-books, which give the wholly erroneous impression that the Royal Tern is a difficult bird to identify in life, on fine points of relative size and proportions.—LUDLOW GRISCOM, *Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass.*

Black Tern in Maryland.—On June 9, 1935, while in western Maryland, I visited a trout pond belonging to James Todd of New York, located at a high altitude near Grantsville, Maryland. While fishing this pond from early afternoon until dark I observed two Black Terns (*Clidonias nigra surinamensis*); they stayed near me, sometimes only fifteen or twenty feet away, until I left the pond and it was too dark to see. Those who resided on the property told me these birds had been there since the spring. I am inclined to think they bred there. I was in that section June, 1936, but regret that I was unable to get to this pond and see if these tern had returned.—TALBOTT DENMEAD, *U. S. Bureau Fisheries, Washington, D. C.*

Black Skimmers in New England.—The striking and unmistakable Skimmer (*Rynchops nigra*) has not been seen in New England since the great invasion after the hurricane of August 26, 1924, when it occurred as far north as Nova Scotia, and remained over a month in Massachusetts waters. The status of the species has changed notably in the past twelve years. There are now flourishing breeding colonies on the New Jersey coast, and in the past few years a small nesting colony has started on Long Island. Should this increase continue, it is within the bounds of possibility that future decades may see it return as a breeding bird to Massachu-