

enough to eat, so we resumed force feeding immediately. The weak bird died within a few hours, but the largest young grabbed pieces of mouse on its own.

The wild owl continued to visit the young nightly and from 22 September through 26 October left a total of 124 voles, 28 deer mice, 4 rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), 1 short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*), and 1 jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonicus*). As soon as all three young began to grab food from long wooden tweezers, we gave up force feeding and put cut up pieces of mouse on a newspaper in front of them in the morning; usually all were gone by noon. The wild bird continued to feed them at night, for we found partly eaten mice when we looked in after dark.

At no time could the young be considered tame, and they never got used to being handled. When we removed them one at a time for feeding, they pushed against each other, hissed, and struck out with their claws. All three fledged successfully, the last flying away 26 October.

I learned later that the Quonset hut at the Naval Facility was visited regularly by night watchmen, who often saw an owl flying in or out of the hut's constantly open doors, and who maintain they never saw two adult owls together. After the owl started visiting our young birds, owl appearances at the Naval Facility became less frequent and soon stopped altogether. At no time did we ever see more than one adult Barn Owl near the young or on our property.

In birds in which both adults care for the young, the inability of one parent to participate usually leads the other to abandon the nesting effort, and we have no reason to believe Barn Owls are an exception to this generalization. Nevertheless we would like to believe that a female Barn Owl mated with our one-winged captive, went 4 miles away to nest and hatch seven young, then found them in our garage and helped us feed them until they fledged. We don't know our captive's sex, but it has never laid an egg. Nor do we know the sex of its visitor, or of the bird that helped us feed the young. If this wild hypothesis be true, it is certainly most unusual.—
EDITH ANDREWS, *University of Massachusetts Research Center, Quaise, Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554.*

The Yellow-billed Tern (*Sterna superciliaris*) in Uruguay.—The pertinent literature (Wetmore, 1926; Friedmann, 1927; Murphy, 1936; Meyer de Schauensee, 1966; Haverschmidt, 1968) refers to this species essentially as an inhabitant of South American inland lakes and rivers. From October through March (spring and summer in the Southern Hemisphere) it is fairly common in coastal Uruguay, where it enjoys a discontinuous distribution in the estuaries and rivermouths along the Rio de la Plata and the Atlantic coast. Its favorite haunts are the shallow expanses of brackish waters behind barrier beaches. These broad sounds are usually 30 to 90 cm, rarely as much as 3 m deep, with either sandy or muddy bottoms. The waters are often turbid from silt or microplankton; their temperature and salinity vary seasonally and with the influx and outflow of sea waters caused by winds and tides. The Yellow-billed Terns fish over these water, and occasionally follow the streams of brackish water out of the inlets to the sea. The stomachs of four specimens I collected were full of small fish.

Wetmore (1926) and Friedmann (1927) have commented on this species' resemblance to the Least Tern (*S. antillarum*) in habits and behavior. It flies more hurriedly than the larger terns, with rapid beats of its narrow, pointed wings conspicuously bent at the carpal joint. It fishes at a considerable height, often hovering high above its prey before diving on it vertically. Quarrelsome and noisy, its voice is a strident "kirrik-kirrik" many times repeated, and also a shorter "kirr-kit."

Table 1 gives collecting data and measurements of 12 Uruguayan specimens I have examined. The wing measurements of adults (175–192 mm) show these birds to be somewhat larger than those of Surinam, which Haverschmidt (1968) gives as 166–175 mm. Of particular interest are the two birds in juvenile plumage, shown in Figure 1, collected at Isla Zapallo in the Department of Artigas in February and March (Table 1), for they must have hatched from eggs probably laid in December.

Breeding dates apparently vary latitudinally. Oates (1901: 195) gives 21 July as the date of six eggs in the British Museum taken in Peru at 5° S. Grant (1911) collected 25 eggs on the Paraguay River at 21° S on 9 and 10 September. Few data are available on the breeding of this species in the southernmost part of its range. Saunders (1894: 124–125) mentions an immature male taken at Colonia on the Rio de la Plata in November. Wetmore (1926) encountered two pairs on the beach near Montevideo 9 January 1921 that acted as though they were nesting, and found young on the wing in juvenile plumage on 31 January in nearby Department of Rocha.

The southernmost breeding record is of two adult females I collected 27 January

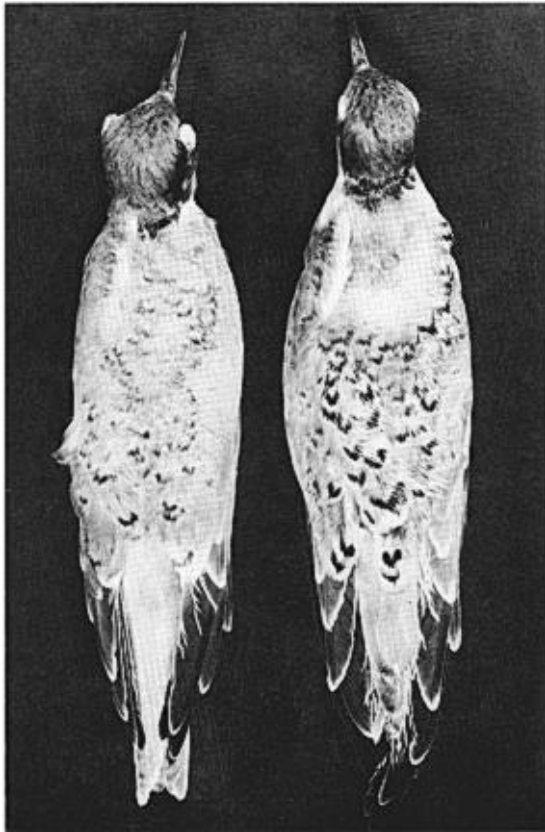


Figure 1. Dorsal view of two juvenile Yellow-billed Terns (nos. 537 and 588) collected in Uruguay on 25 February and 2 March 1960. See Table 1 for details.

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS (mm) OF THE SKINS OF *STERNA SUPERCILLIARIS* IN URUGUAY

No.	Locality	Date	Sex and age ¹	Wing chord	Tail	Exposed culmen	Tarsus	Middle toe ²
229	Dept. Canelones ³	22 Oct. 1923	? Ad.	189	76	33.8	16.9	12.2
230	Dept. Canelones ³	25 Oct. 1924	♀ Ad.	181	61	32.1	16.5	12.0
231	Dept. Canelones ³	19 Oct. 1952	♀ Ad.	187	81	34.7	16.8	11.8
484	Dept. Canelones ⁴	15 Nov. 1953	♂ Ad.	180	74	34.2	15.7	12.0
485	Dept. Canelones ⁴	22 Nov. 1953	♀ Ad.	188	75	31.9	16.4	12.3
486	Dept. Canelones ⁴	22 Nov. 1953	♂ Ad.	181	75	33.5	16.4	11.4
537	Dept. Artigas ⁴	25 Feb. 1960	♂ Juv.	150	61	23.4	14.4	11.2
588	Dept. Artigas ⁴	2 Mar. 1960	♂ Juv.	166	68	25.6	16.4	11.8
546	Dept. Canelones ⁵	2 Feb. 1957	♀ Ad.	175	77	34.9	16.8	12.3
573	Dept. Maldonado ⁵	27 Jan. 1959	♀ Ad.	181	78	32.0	16.1	12.0
634	Dept. Maldonado ⁵	6 Dec. 1964	♀ Ad.	186	77	32.2	16.6	11.5
539	Dept. Colonia ⁶	27 Dec. 1967	♀ Ad.	192	79 ⁷	31.4	16.8	11.0

¹ Abbreviations: Ad. = adult; Juv. = young or juvenile.

² Excluding claw.

³ Collection of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, Montevideo.

⁴ Collection of Sociedad Taguató.

⁵ Collection of the author.

⁶ Collection of the Sociedad Guazú-birá.

⁷ Feathers obviously worn.

1959 from six pairs near Arroyo del Potrero, Uruguay, at 35° S. Both females had active gonads; one preserved in my collection (no. 573) had two empty ovarian follicles and an unshelled egg in the oviduct measuring 31.5 × 24.7 mm.

I express my gratitude to Juan Cuello, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, Montevideo, who permitted me to borrow specimens from the collections of this museum and those of Sociedad Taguató, and to José S. Abente, who allowed me to study the skin of a Yellow-billed Tern in the Sociedad Guazú-birá's collection of Montevideo.

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RODOLFO ESCALANTE, *Guayaquí 3425, Apto. 301, Montevideo, Uruguay.*

Swimming ability of the Barn Swallow.—The note by Scherner (*Auk*, 86: 350, 1969) regarding the swimming ability of a Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) brings to mind a similar incident involving another palaeartic migrant to Africa, the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). On the night of 18 April 1964 Ted Davison and I, assisted by Ted's sons and by Mr. Jordaan, Warden of the Lake McIlwaine National Park near Salisbury, were banding swallows and martins at a roost in a reed bed in the lake, when one of the Barn Swallows fell into the water. It immediately swam away from our boat, utilizing what in swimming terminology would be called the "butterfly" stroke, i.e. simultaneously moving both wings up, forward, down, and backwards, in a circular motion, each backstroke against the water thrusting the body forward. It progressed in this manner for approximately 10 feet before reaching a reed and clambering out. At this stage our attention was diverted by the drifting boat and in the darkness we lost track of the bird, so I am unable to say to what extent the plumage was soaked by the immersion.

On several occasions while collecting specimens for the National Museums I have had occasion to observe passerines that had fallen into water after being shot; the most recent example occurred on 3 March 1969 when I shot an African Sand Martin (*Riparia paludicola*) while canoeing on the Sabi River near Birchenough Bridge. My impression is that the air trapped in the plumage imparts sufficient buoyancy to keep the bird afloat almost indefinitely, so that I wonder whether Scherner is altogether correct in stating that the Willow Warbler spread its wings and tail feathers so that it did not sink; was this action not merely part of the swimming movement?—H. DESMOND JACKSON, *P.O. Box 8014, Causeway, Rhodesia.*