

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The Birds of Serrana Bank in the Western Caribbean Sea.—Serrana Bank, about 20 miles long, with several islets scattered along its length, is located in the western Caribbean Sea north of 14° north latitude and west of 80° west longitude, about 110 statute miles northeast of Isla de Providencia, and about 210 statute miles due east of the Río Ulana (Sandy River) on the northern coast of Nicaragua. On a visit to Serrana Bank in the late summer of 1957 the junior author found four fishermen from Isla de Providencia on one of the islands and was told that they were rotated with four others on a monthly basis. Each group was landed with a 55-gallon drum of fresh water and 100 pounds of flour for basic subsistence, and the men fished and dried their catch until the next crew arrived. No nesting birds were observed on this first visit, a circumstance to be attributed in all probability to interference by the human inhabitants, to whom birds and their eggs would be a welcome dietary addition.

On a second visit on May 20, 1962, it was found that fishing operations had been discontinued, and there were no indications of recent human habitation. Narrow Cay, on the western side of the South Cay Channel (at 14° 20' 54" N, 80° 15' 3" W), had a breeding colony of Noddy and Bridled terns, with frigate birds and some boobies also present.

The surface of the cay in question is elevated 5 to 6 feet above sea level for an area 400 to 500 feet long by 25 to 50 feet wide. This elevation is composed of coral rubble broken from the reef, mixed with a little sand and completely bare of any plant growth. Specimens were taken of all of the birds seen except for one medium-sized species of tern that was too wild to allow approach within shotgun range.

The only account of the bird life of Serrana Bank that has come to our attention is that of Bond and de Schauensee in a report on the birds collected on the fifth George Vanderbilt Expedition of 1941 (Monograph No. 6, Acad. Nat. Sci. Phil., 1944). The Vanderbilts visited the bank on March 20 and 21, 1941, with Dawson Feathers as naturalist. Specimens of the Semipalmated Plover, Sanderling, and Sooty Tern were collected by Vanderbilt on March 20, and a Cliff Swallow was taken the following day. A Great Blue Heron, presumed to be a North American migrant, was seen, and Feathers recorded two Duck Hawks.

Following is a list of the specimens taken by H. R. Bullis, Jr., and Paul Struhsaker on May 20, 1962, and deposited in the United States National Museum:

Sula leucogaster leucogaster. Brown Booby. Three of these boobies were seen, and a female in immature dress was collected. There was no indication that they were located on a breeding ground.

Fregata magnificens. Magnificent Frigatebird. Twenty or so present were engaged in harassing the small terns whenever any of these were in the air, an action that was watched for an hour through binoculars before landing on the island. Two adult female frigatebirds collected are typical of this species. Recent studies, not yet published, indicate that proposed subspecies of *magnificens* that have been described are not valid.

Sterna dougallii dougallii. Roseate Tern. A male and a female collected are adult birds in breeding plumage, but there was no indication that they were nesting. Gonads in the male showed only slight development.

Sterna anaethetus recognita. Bridled Tern. About 50 were present, with nests in which eggs had not yet hatched. Two females were taken. Breeding colonies of this race have been recorded on Saddle Cay in Lighthouse Reef, off British Honduras, and on Los Roques off the coast of Venezuela, in addition to various localities in the Greater and Lesser Antilles.

Thalasseus maximus maximus. Royal Tern. An immature female was collected.

Anous stolidus stolidus. Noddy Tern. The breeding colony on Narrow Cay numbered 200 to 250 birds, with another small group located on a separate coral islet about a mile to the eastward. Between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of the nests had recently hatched young not over a week old, while others held from one to three eggs. Noddy colonies have been reported on Glover's Reef off British Honduras, and on Isla de Aves, Los Roques, and Los Hermanos, off the coast of Venezuela, in addition to numerous West Indian localities.—ALEXANDER WETMORE and HARVEY R. BULLIS, JR., *United States National Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Pascagoula Fishery Station, Fish and Wildlife Service, Pascagoula, Mississippi, January 11, 1963.*