

and a marshy lake margin between 14 June and 8 July (a number of these birds had largely dark bills on 25 June, indicating a lack of androgens [see Witschi and Miller 1938], and several were seen well enough to distinguish the characteristics of first-year males, which usually do not breed [see Kessel 1957]). Six successful nestings were recorded, with another three nestings suspected on the basis of the presence of paired birds and birds carrying nesting material.

Nesting sites were typical of those used by Starlings elsewhere (see Kessel 1957): an old Common Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) hole near the top of an 8-m stub of balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*); a burned-out knothole 6 m up in a fire-killed paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*); a bird nest-box; and under the upturned lip of metal barn roofing.

The first fledgling in 1978 was seen on 25 June; on this same day, another family of nearly-fledged young was seen in their nest entrance hole. On 9 July, while one nest in a barn still contained young, three adults and 11 juvenals were perched in a tree beside a near-by field.

A mixed flock of Rusty Blackbirds (*Euphagus carolinus*) and Starlings fed in a harvested field of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) at Delta Junction during September 1978. Peak numbers occurred on 12 September, when 200 to 250 Starlings flocked with about 2,000 blackbirds. The flock included young Starlings that still retained juvenal head feathers. This flock had diminished to about 20 blackbirds and 12 Starlings by 26 September.

Starlings began feeding on the Fairbanks city dump in October 1978. Thirty Starlings and 10 Rusty Blackbirds were there on 7 October and throughout most of the month; 13 Starlings remained through November; and the last 8 Starlings and 3 blackbirds disappeared in early February 1979, during a seven-day period averaging -40°C —the only severe cold of the 1978–79 winter.

Summering and breeding populations of the Starling will undoubtedly continue to increase in interior Alaska, particularly in agriculturally developed areas. A few Starlings may manage to survive the winter in the vicinity of dumps or other sources of food, especially during mild winters, as have some Rusty Blackbirds. Most, however, will probably migrate. Thus far, the presence of Starlings has been seasonal, with a spring influx in early May and an autumnal exodus during the last half of September. Already, Starlings have been found in winter along the coast of southern Alaska, at Cordova, Valdez, Seward, Homer, and Kodiak, where

they have not yet been recorded as summer visitants or breeders (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

As Starlings increase in interior Alaska, there will be some competition with local birds, primarily for nest sites. Most pressure will probably be on the Common Flicker, the only local nesting woodpecker of the open forest. Swallow nest sites may also be usurped by Starlings. Some Violet-green and Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta thalassina* and *Iridoprocne bicolor*) use bird nest-boxes with holes large enough for Starlings, and Tree Swallows nest in holes in trees and in the rotted tops of telephone poles, where Starlings also nest. On 25 June 1978 I witnessed severe damage to an 18-nest Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) colony caused by a group of roosting, non-breeding Starlings. The colony was under the gable of an open hay shed. In addition to roosting along inside beams, Starlings were using some incomplete or broken mud swallow nests as roost sites. Twenty-six eggs or their remains were on the ground below the colony, clearly thrown out of the swallow nests by the Starlings.

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FIRST NESTING RECORD OF GRAY-HOODED GULL FROM ECUADOR

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The Gray-hooded Gull (*Larus cirrocephalus*) has previously been found breeding in only one area on the west coast of South America: at two sites in the vicinity

of the Paracas Peninsula, Department of Ica, Peru (Tovar and Ashmole 1970, Duffy and Atkins 1979). We report here the discovery of a nesting colony on the coast of southwestern Ecuador near the tip of the Santa Elena Peninsula, almost 1,500 km north of the Paracas region.

Although first definitely recorded in Ecuador only in 1938 (Quäbicker 1939), *L. cirrocephalus* has since become fairly common in the Gulf of Guayaquil area, particularly in the estuary of the Guayas River (Lévesque 1964, Mills 1967, pers. observ.). Even though the species is resident in this area and birds in breeding plumage have been seen frequently, to date no nesting colony has been found.

In contrast with its relative abundance around the

Gulf of Guayaquil, this gull is uncommon on the Santa Elena Peninsula, roughly 100 km to the west. Marchant (1958), who lived here for over three years, considered it "only an unusual visitor . . . since my specimens are the only two definite records." It appears to have increased since then, for in July 1978 we found small numbers at several sites in the region. We further noted, as did Hughes (1968), that the species avoided the open ocean and barren outer beaches in favor of the area's few existing lagoons and apparently artificial impoundments. In the largest impoundment, at a partly abandoned saltworks, we found a small nesting colony of Gray-hooded Gulls on 13 July 1978.

The site is located in the Department of Guayaquil, about 10 km WNW of Anconito on the south coast of the Santa Elena Peninsula, west of the road between that town and La Libertad where the road curves away from the coast. Small numbers of *L. cirrocephalus*, many of them in breeding plumage, were scattered over most of the extensive area of shallow brackish water. Near the northwestern edge of the complex, we noticed a group on and above a low flat island well out from the dike. Some of the gulls were incubating.

Most of the gulls flushed when we were still about 75 m from the island. Many flew directly at us, circling overhead (not dive-bombing), and protesting with a loud, guttural cackling "keraw, keraw." We could not approach closer because of intervening water and deep mud, probably quicksand, but from this vantage point we could survey the entire colony.

The island itself was only slightly above water level, and was about 200 × 100 m. The nests were widely dispersed, though with the majority concentrated on the somewhat higher parts of the island. Nests were constructed of sand, twigs, and other debris, and were slightly raised. We estimated that about 30 pairs of gulls were present. All stages of the nesting cycle were represented: most pairs were still incubating, but several downy chicks were running about, and six feathered but flightless juveniles were present.

The Gray-hooded Gull has become numerous on the west coast of South America only during the last 50 years (Tovar and Ashmole 1970). Its present northern range limit seems to be at or near the Santa Elena Peninsula. The species perhaps is still consolidating its position here, which could account for the low density of nests in what appears to be a suitable area; in Argentina, a colony was described as being so densely packed with nests as to almost preclude walking between them (Narosky and Izurieta 1973). It is also possible that this gull is now colonizing a habitat—artificial coastal impoundments and saltworks—that has only recently become available.

The virtual absence of suitable habitat for this species on the tropical coast north of the Santa Elena Peninsula seems likely to slow or halt its further northward expansion. We found only one potential site for this species north of the Peninsula, a group of recently constructed impoundments about 30 km north of the town of Santa Elena. However, no gulls were present here during either of our two visits in July 1978 and we know of no reports of this gull north of the Santa Elena Peninsula in Ecuador. No reports are known from Colombia (Meyer de Schauensee 1970), and there is only one unconfirmed sighting from Panama (Ridgely 1976).

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