

# The Laughing Gull on the eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia

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A short resume of my observations of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia is presented here. On my first trip to the Cobb Island area of Virginia in 1935, I found a large colony of Laughing Gulls on Gould Marsh and the Easter Islands. At that time this was the only large colony on the Peninsula. There were a few scattered pairs nesting on other nearby marshy islands.

In the intervening years the numbers of this species have increased noticeably. There are now colonies, numbering in the thousands of pairs, on Fisherman's Island, Wreck Island, Metomkin Island, and in the Chincoteague areas, as well as a large colony near South Point, Maryland. A colony, started in the late 1940's, on an island near Public Landing, Maryland, was abandoned in 1978.

During the period 1935 through 1982, I banded approximately 30,000 Laughing Gulls. From these bandings I have had 314 encounters, at distances ranging from the nesting colony in which banded, up to approximately 4800 km (3,000 miles). Ages, for these encounters, range from under 6 months up to 8 years.

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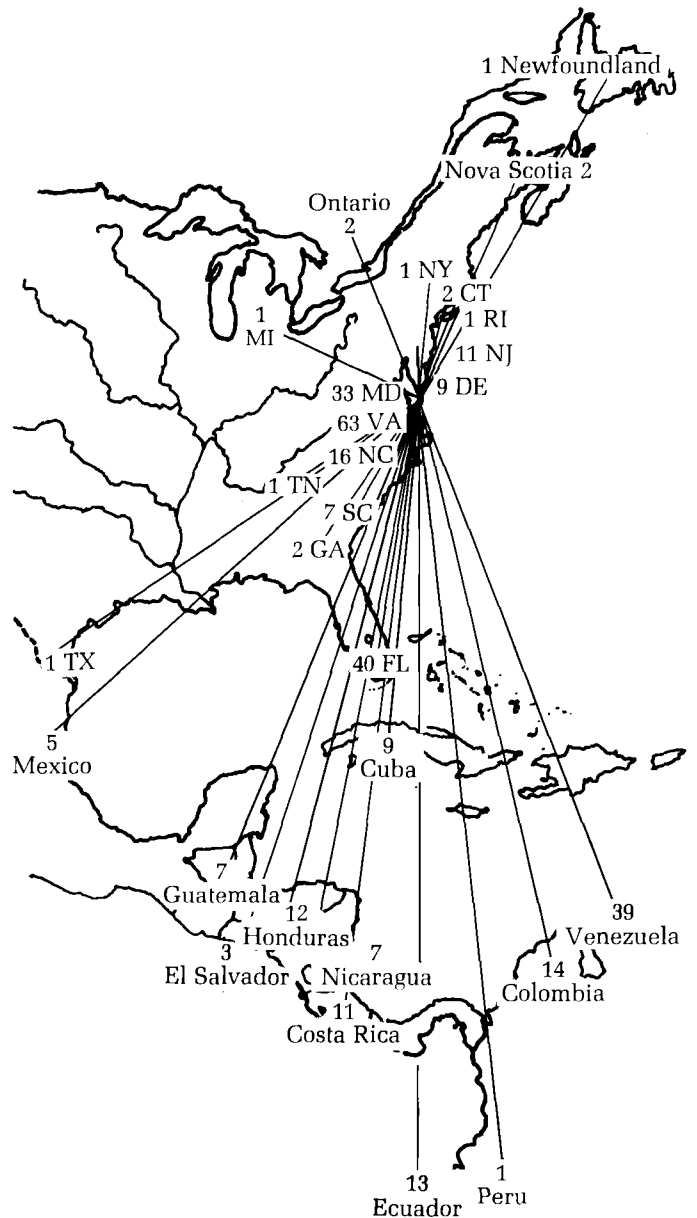
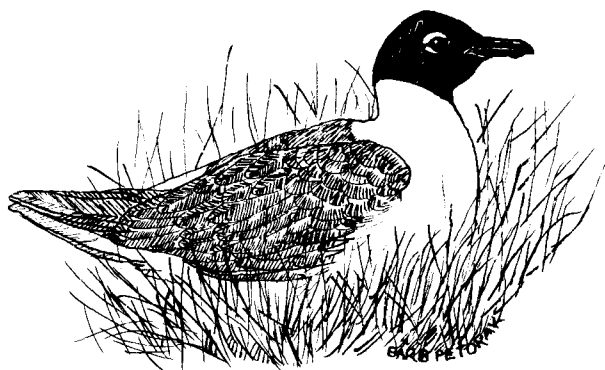


Figure 1. Encounters of Laughing Gulls banded on eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia.

# Wandering Chimney Swifts

Ralph W. Dexter

Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) which enter the nesting colony on the campus of Kent State University Kent, Ohio, generally soon obtain a mate and occupy one of the air-shafts on the older buildings, or join a mated pair as a visitor for a season or two. In spring and fall, migrant swifts roost in these air-shafts over varying lengths of time. However, there have been a few birds which remained over most of the summer and often returned for a number of years but never settled down in a permanent place and did not nest on the campus. These I call "wanderers." Over the past 38 years I observed 9 such cases. Table 1 is a synopsis of 4 cases which illustrate this type of swift behavior. Histories of 2 nesting swifts which exhibited unusual wandering behavior are presented in Table 2. See diagrams in Dexter (1969:194 or 1981:137) for location of air-shafts.

"Return" and "repeat" records were based upon re-trapping of the birds. Sight records were based upon observing paint-marked birds in a shaft — using a mirror by day or a flashlight by night. Because the true wanderers never nested in the campus colony, sex of these birds could not be determined. The 2 swifts which finally nested were a male and a female and eventually became mates. I have previously published some normal life histories (Dexter 1956, 1961a, 1968, 1969, 1979), and some cases of unusual behavior, especially incompatibility (Dexter 1951, 1961b, 1967).

I conclude that, while non-breeding Chimney Swifts are known to roost in flocks during the summer, a few individuals apparently associate with nesting birds as temporary, casual visitors, going from site to site, but do not join the colony as nesting birds. Rarely, a nesting swift may also engage in wandering both before and after nesting.

## Literature cited

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 \_\_\_\_\_ 1974. Unusually large numbers of Chimney Swifts at a nest. *Bird-Banding* 45:365.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1978. Chimney Swifts use same nest for five consecutive years. *Bird-Banding* 49:278.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1979. Fourteen-year life history of a banded Chimney Swift. *Bird-Banding* 50:30-33.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1981. Chimney Swifts reuse ten-year-old nest. *North Am. Bird Bander* 6:136-137.

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**Table 1. Four case histories of "wandering" Chimney Swifts at Kent, Ohio**

Date banded (B), recaptured (R), or sighted (S)	Shaft no.	Other birds trapped simultaneously	Notes
<b>No. 42-188515, sex unknown, traced for 2 seasons</b>			
6 Jun '47 (B)	B1	42-188516	Both new
10 Jun '47 (R)	B1	42-188516	Roosted side by side, but did not nest
25 Jun '47 (R)	B1	42-188516	
3 Jul '47 (R)	B1	42-188524	Roosted different walls
17 Sep '47 (R)	N9	4 others	Included N9 mate, 42-184484
25 Sep '47 (R)	N9	3 others	Included N9 mate, 42-184484
21 May '48 (R)	B1	42-188516	Were banded together; -15 now a cripple
31 May '48 (R)	L3		Alone
1 Jun '48 (R)	L2	42-188518	
17 Jun '48 (S)	J1		Alone
10 Aug '48 (R)	N9	7 others	Included nesting pair from N9 (See Dexter 1967 for similar wandering cripple)
<b>No. 21-128562, sex unknown, traced for 4 seasons</b>			
7 Aug '53 (B)	R1		2 others not trapped
21 May '54 (R)	D4		Alone
1 Sep '54 (R)	S3		Alone
8 Oct '54 (R)	R1		Last swift on campus, '54
29 Apr '55 (R)	S3		Alone
15 May '55 (R)	R2		Alone
18 Sep '55 (R)	S1	9 others	Included pair that nested in S1
26 Apr '56 (R)	S1		Alone
28 Apr '56 (S)	P3		Alone
29 Apr '56 (S)	P3		With an unidentified swift
2 May '56 (S)	P3		With an unidentified swift

**Table 1. (cont.)**

Date banded (B), recaptured (R), or sighted (S)	Shaft no.	Other birds trapped simultaneously	Notes
<b>No. 25-137568, sex unknown, traced for 3 seasons</b>			
4 Oct '62 (B)	S1	4 others	Included individuals that nested in S1, N9, P3, and R2
29 Jun '63 (R)	S1	4 others	Nesting pair from S1 and 2 other visitors
2 Jul '63 (S)	U	3 others	Nesting pair from U and another visitor
13 Jul '63 (R)	A5	Nesting pair from A5	Nestlings on nest
17 May '64 (R)	S1	Nesting pair from S1	1 egg on nest
20 May '64 (S)	S2		Alone
21 May '64 (S)	P3	2 others	
23 May '64 (R)	P3	2 others	None remained for season
<b>No. 73-26461, sex unknown, traced for 4 seasons</b>			
20 Sep '74 (B)	S1	56 others	Included a "6-some" which resided in S1 (See Dexter 1974)
10 May '75 (R)	A5	91 others	Included former nesting pair from A5
2 Jun '75 (R)	E1	Nesting pair from E1	2 eggs on nest
3 Jun '75 (R)	D1	Nesting pair from D1	1 egg on nest
10 Jun '75 (R)	D1		D1 pair remained with with 1 egg on nest
19 Sep '75 (R)	E1	7 others	Included nesting pair from E1
29 Sep '75 (R)	B1	3 others	
17 Jul '76 (R)	S1	5 others	Included nesting pair from S1
20 Jul '76 (R)	S1	8 others	Included nesting pair from S1
30 Jul '76 (R)	S1	5 others	Included nesting pair from S1
28 Sep '76 (R)	J1	3 others	Mates & seasonal visitor of J1
12 May '77 (R)	C3	28 others	2 repeats & 26 new birds
3 Jun '77 (R)	S1	870-14368	Prospective mates, but did not nest
21 Sep '77 (R)	Q2	7 others	Included nesting pair from Q2

**Table 2. Two case histories of "wandering" Chimney Swifts that eventually nested at Kent Ohio.**

Date banded (B), recaptured (R), or sighted (S)	Shaft no.	Other birds trapped simultaneously	Notes
<b>No. 71-32690, a male, traced for 5 seasons</b>			
19 Sep '75 (B)	S1	113 others	Banded with 71-32691 (see below)
3 Jul '76 (R)	C3	3 others	Nesting pair from C3 and another seasonal visitor (i.e. a 4-some). Nest soon fell
11 Jul '76 (S)	A5		With nesting pair from A5
15 Jul '76 (S)	S1		Beside nest with 3 nestlings
17 Jul '76 (S)	S1	8 others	Including nesting pair from S1 and 3 juv.
20 Jul '76 (R)	S1	3 others	2 adults & 3 juv. also present but not trapped
25 Jul '76 (S)	C3		With 2 juv. which survived fall of nest
26 Jul '76 (R)	N9	2 others	Including one of nesting pair from N9. Its mate remained with nestlings
18 Sep '76 (R)	E1	162 others	Including nesting pair from E1
3 Jun '77 (R)	C3	870-14369	Failed to nest
10 Sep '77 (R)	L2	4 others	Including nesting pair from L2
7 Jun '78 (R)	C3	2 others	Nesting pair from C3 (Nest nearly complete)
6 Jun '78 (S)	B1	71-32691	Started nest foundation but abandoned it
4 Jul '78 (S)	L2		Temporary visitor with a 3-some

**Table 2. (cont.)**

Date banded (B), recaptured (R), or sighted (S)	Shaft no.	Other birds trapped simultaneously	Notes
20 Sep '78 (R)	A5	5 others	Including one bird from nesting pair in A5 and -90's mate from B1
27 Sep '78 (R)	L2	2 others	Including one of the nesting birds from L2
4 Oct '78 (R)	A5	9 others	Including one of the nesting birds from A5 and -90's mate from B1
2 Jun '79 (R)	A1	2 others	Including 71-32564 which nested in A1 1974-78 and nested here again with -90
3 Jun '79 (S)	B1		Alone, but soon returned to A1 for nesting with -64
21 Jul '79 (S)	A5		With nesting pair from A5 and another temporary visitor; 4 nestlings on nest
3 Aug '79 (R)	A5	8 others	Including nesting pair from A5 and -91
8 Sep '79 (R)	A5	12 others	Including nesting pair from A5, his own mate -64 from A1, and the nesting pair from C3
<b>No. 71-32691, a female, traced for 7 seasons.</b>			
19 Sep '75 (B)	S1	113 others	Banded with 71-32690 (see above)
7 Jun '76 (R)	A5	73-26457	Mate of -91; had formerly nested in A5
17 Jul '76 (S)	S1	8 others	Including nesting pair from S1 and 3 juv. Nest in A5 abandoned; -91 immature?
20 Jul '76 (R)	S1	8 others	Including nesting pair from S1 and their juv.
30 Jul '76 (R)	S1	5 others	Including nesting pair from S1 and her former mate -57
18 Sep '76 (R)	E1	162 others	Including her former mate -57
13 May '77 (R)	A5	4 others	Including her former mate -57
26 May '77 (S)	S1		Another bird sitting on old nest used every year since 1972; 3:30 P.M. (See Dexter 1978, 1981)
26 May '77 (S)	A5		Returned to A5 that evening and nested with former mate -57
4 Jun '78 (R)	S1	870-14396	Did not nest
6 Jun '78 (S)	B1	71-32690	Started nest foundation, but abandoned it
19 Jul '78 (S)	Q2		Temporary visitor with nesting pair from Q2 (nestlings on nest)
16 Sep '78 (R)	Q2	19 others	Including nesting pair from Q2
20 Sep '78 (R)	A5	5 others	Including her A5 mate, -57, for 1976-77 and her B1 mate, -90, for 1978
4 Oct '78 (R)	A5	9 others	Including former mates, -57 and -90
20 Jul '79 (R)	P3	71-18487	-87 had nested in C3; -91 did not nest in 1979
3 Aug '79 (R)	A5	8 others	Including nesting pair from A5 (one of which, -57, a former mate of -91 in A5)
8 Sep '79 (R)	A5	12 others	Including nesting pair from A5 and her former mate, -90
15 May '80 (R)	C3		Alone
18 May '80 (R)	B1		Alone. Absent from campus during nesting season
25 Aug '80 (R)	A5	5 others	Including nesting pair from A5
28 Jun '81 (R)	C3		Alone. Again absent from campus during nesting season
24 Sep '81	B1	5 others	Including one member of nesting pair from B1