

THE CASPIAN TERN IN IDAHO

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Although it is a breeding species in many parts of the Great Basin (Ryser 1985) and along the Columbia River (Thompson and Tabor 1981), the Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) has been infrequently recorded in Idaho. Burleigh (1972) listed it as an uncommon, local summer visitant to the southern part of the state with one record for northern Idaho at Lewiston, Nez Perce Co. He thought it might breed in Idaho, but knew of no colonies. Davis (1935), Levy (1950), and Oring (1962) recorded it in small numbers from Rupert (Minidoka Co.), south-central Idaho, and Camas National Wildlife Refuge (Jefferson Co.), respectively. Larrison et al. (1967) stated that it was known to breed only at the Dingle Marsh in Bear Lake Co. but gave no details. I present evidence here that this tern breeds at several locations in southern Idaho, is sometimes found in moderate concentrations in this part of the state, and is more than an accidental visitor to the northern part of the state.

Known breeding colonies stretch across the entire southern part of Idaho. In southwestern Idaho about 100 adults have produced 20 young a year from at least 1977 to 1989 in the Snake River islands section of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (pers. comm., refuge personnel). Sonnenberg and Powers (1977) considered it abundant here during summer, and the reported nesting in the spring of 1980 from a Snake River island near Nyssa, Oregon (Rogers 1980a), may have been by part of this population. In south-central Idaho Liven Peterson, in an unpublished survey of colonial birds for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, found a colony of 20 nests at Magic Reservoir, Blaine Co., in the summer of 1972. He banded 29 young here. Charles Trost (unpubl. data) estimated 10-15 nests here in 1984 and found 16 fledglings on 18 July of that year. In July 1984 Trost (pers. comm.) found a colony of 15-20 pairs at Mormon Reservoir, Camas Co. In southeastern Idaho an unknown number nested in 1972 at North Lake Wildlife Management Area, Jefferson Co. (L. Peterson unpubl. data). A colony of 14 birds with young was found at Blackfoot Reservoir, Caribou Co., in the summer of 1982 (Rogers 1982), and was present at least the next 2 years with 10-15 pairs (C. Trost unpubl. data). A small colony of 5 to 10 pairs has nested at Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Bear Lake Co., from at least 1980 to 1989 (G. Deutscher pers. comm.). Two to three pairs nested at American Falls Reservoir, Bingham and Power counties, in 1984 (C. Trost unpubl. data).

A review of quarterly reports from *American Birds* revealed an absence of any Caspian Tern records in Idaho during the 1960s and very early 1970s. This lack of records may reflect in part a paucity of active field workers in the state during this time, and Oring (1962) did find small numbers in Jefferson Co. Since the mid-1970s Caspian Terns have been reported consistently from southern Idaho. Larger concentrations include 14 at Rupert in the spring of 1976 (Rogers 1976) and 15 at Island Park Reservoir, Fremont Co., in the spring of 1978 (Rogers 1978). At Lake Lowell, Canyon Co., the Caspian Tern has been consistently recorded in small numbers with 14 in 1980 (Rogers 1980b) and 13 in 1987 (pers. obs.). I found 13 at C.J. Strike Dam in early September 1987. I have consistently found this species in late summer at American Falls Reservoir in the 1980s with a peak of 61 birds at the mouth of the Snake River in August 1986.

There was a record from west-central Idaho of one bird at Cascade Reservoir, Valley Co., in 1984 (Rogers 1984a). Northern Idaho records I know of are of two birds at Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge, Boundary Co., in 1983 (Rogers 1983a), four birds at Pend Oreille Lake, Bonner Co., in 1985 (Rogers 1985a), and nine records from the Lewiston area in the late 1970s and 1980s (Rogers 1983a,b,

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1984a,b, 1985a,b, 1987, Weber 1981). Weber (1981) collected an adult female at Lewiston on 19 July 1978.

The discovery of six nesting colonies in southern Idaho and more frequent records in the last 15 years, including some of the fairly high numbers, indicate that the Caspian Tern may be increasing in the state. Since Burleigh lived for 11 years in the 1940s and 1950s at Lewiston and recorded only one Caspian Tern and there were no other northern Idaho records (Burleigh 1972), it certainly appears that this species has recently become more common in northern Idaho.

The only information on dispersal of Caspian Terns from Idaho is of one young bird banded at Magic Reservoir in the summer of 1972 recovered in April 1973 at Morelos Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico (L. Peterson unpubl. data).

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