

NESTING OF THE COMMON TERN AT THOUSAND ISLANDS,
JEFFERSON COUNTY, NEW YORK

BY CLARENCE BRETSCH

For at least twelve years Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) have nested at the Thousand Islands, St. Lawrence River, Jefferson County, New York. Eaton's late edition "Birds of New York" states that these birds are not known to breed within the limits of New York State except on the east coast. Mabel Metcalf Merwin, of Clinton, N. Y., observed them nesting near Clayton June 26, 1916, (see the *Auk*, Vol. 35, page 74, 1918) and I had observed them for years prior thereto in small numbers. They have been increasing quite rapidly in the past few years. The natives call them gulls.

The terns follow the fishing guides' boats, having learned that is the quickest and easiest way to procure food, picking up dead minnows that are thrown away, and when fish are not biting many fishermen amuse themselves by throwing minnows in the air and watching the terns catch them before they hit the water. They are very tame, many times coming within ten feet of the boat. When one of the terns catches a minnow, he immediately sets up a screeching that attracts the others, and they at once commence to chase it and try to take the same away.

In the narrows at the head of Thousand Island Park, Hanlon Nulty and Hugh Dickinson, during the summers of 1924 and 1925, maintained a dock where they sold live bait to fishermen. By throwing out the dead minnows several times a day to the terns, they succeeded in taming them to such an extent that many times while I was there, with not a tern in sight, they would go on to the dock, call and make a motion with their arms and hands, and the terns would immediately come if within hearing or seeing distance.

Since becoming a bird bander, I have given the terns as well as all other birds, closer study and attention. One can find these terns breeding from above Clayton, N. Y., to Fishers' Landing, N. Y., a distance of over seven miles, usually from June 10 to July 10. There are two islands, called First and Second Shoals, directly opposite Fishers' Landing, and about five hundred feet from the main landing, with no trees or vegetation on them—just bare rocks three or four feet above the water, and here the terns lay their eggs on the rocks in small depressions, without building any nests and in many instances without any lining whatever. On other islands I have found them near small tussocks of grass, and find they usually have from two to three eggs. I observed one nest with four eggs. Hundreds of motor boats pass

them daily, and in many instances only ten or fifteen feet away. I have never observed any of the terns brooding, although I have kept a careful watch for this during the day time. Query: Do they brood at all? If so, are these birds here an exception, or do they depend upon the rays of the sun to hatch the eggs?

There is a low island above Clayton, N. Y., near the head of Grindstone Island that for fifty years or more has been called by the natives "Gull Island," and several smaller islands around there called "Little Gull Islands," and here the terns breed by the hundreds, but this year, 1926, scarcely a bird was hatched. I only found one young tern all summer, and this one on August 2, an extremely late date for this locality. I placed band No. 397970 on it. This year I arrived at my summer home at Thousand Islands on July 8, and the next day, in company with my captain, E. H. Halladay, visited all the breeding islands, intending to band a large number of young terns, but much to my surprise found none. I found a large number of eggs on all of the islands. I counted 137 eggs on a small part of Gull Island. We continued to visit this island twice a week, but never could we find any results, the eggs remaining the same, excepting the one young tern found on August 2. On August 18 Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) suddenly appeared in large numbers, and the terns at once departed. On August 22 I broke open over twenty-five eggs, and all were spoiled. There must have been three hundred eggs still left unhatched on the different islands. Natives reported a very cold June, and I am of the belief that the eggs must have become chilled; but whatever the cause, one thing is sure—scarcely a young tern was hatched in that locality during the year 1926.

GARY, INDIANA.

A FIELD TRIP IN THE SIERRA

BY MRS. H. J. TAYLOR

In the Eldorado Forest Reserve near Echo Lake, California, the city of Berkeley maintains each summer, for nine or ten weeks, a Municipal Camp. It lies on an open flat of 7600 feet elevation, overlooking Lake Tahoe four miles distant. Echo Lake is half a mile or more west of the Camp. A flume carries water power from the lake to remote parts, running as a surface stream to the Camp then underground for a distance, again gushing forth soon to join the American River.