

mately one hour. Although California Gulls (*Larus californicus*) and Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) were present on the lake, the Sabine's Gull did not associate with them. During the next hour the bird was observed to fly around the lake several times after which it was not seen again. The characteristic triangular patches of black and white on the wings and the forked tail were easily seen as the bird flew; the light bill tip was also noted. Color photographs of the bird in flight and on the water were obtained and have been verified by Dr. Fred A. Ryser, Curator of Birds and Mammals, University of Nevada Museum of Biology. Copies are on file in the University of Nevada Museum of Biology, Reno, Nev. and in the U.S. National Photoduplicate File (accession number 62-1Ca,b) at Laurel, Md.—WILLIAM H. CLARK, 705 Smith St., Vale, Oregon 97918; KEITH I. GIEZENTANNER, Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501; and JAMES L. HAINLINE, Center for Water Resources Research, Desert Research Institute, Reno, Nevada 89507. Accepted 6 December 1973.

**Unusual prey of Common Terns: swim-bladders of large fish.**—While studying Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) in a large colony at Monomoy, Massachusetts, I saw on several occasions adult terns fly in with peculiar inflated objects and offer them to their chicks. During six days of observation between 14 and 31 July 1973, I saw at least 14 of these objects brought to a small plot containing 30 broods. A few others were seen being carried to other parts of the colony, and the total number brought into the colony of some 2000 pairs of terns must have run into scores, probably hundreds. Several were collected and were subsequently identified by Dr. R. H. Backus of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution as swim-bladders of the common sea-robin (*Prionotus carolinus*).

The swim-bladder of this fish is a lung-shaped object consisting of a pair of inflated lobes, each about 40 mm long and 15–20 mm in diameter, joined together near one end and with muscles attached to the outer margins. In the live fish it occupies more than half of the visceral cavity. Illustrations of swim-bladders of this and related species are published in Demski et al. (Amer. Zool., 13:1147–1148, 1973), Tavolga (Nat. Hist., 69: 48–49, cover photograph, March, 1960), and Evans (Copeia, 1973:315–321, 1973).

The observation of terns carrying these swim-bladders poses two puzzles: how they obtained them and why they brought them to their young. The common sea-robin is abundant in the area, but is largely a bottom-dwelling fish and is larger than a tern, ranging to 400 mm in length and to 800 g in weight. It is inconceivable that a tern could catch one or extract the swim-bladder from a dead one. However, sea-robins are regarded as a nuisance by local fishermen and are often killed and discarded or cut up for bait. It is conceivable that as the body disintegrates or is eaten by scavengers, the swim-bladders would be released and float freely to the surface.

Even floating on the surface, this would be exceptional food for Common Terns, which feed almost exclusively on live prey. I have occasionally seen Arctic Terns (*S. paradisaea*) feeding on fish offal, but I have not previously identified such among several thousand items of food that I have seen fed to young Common Terns. Although Common Terns feed on a wide variety of invertebrates as well as on fish, these swim-bladders do not resemble any normal prey species, except perhaps inflated fry of the northern puffer (*Sphoeroides maculatus*). I have never seen that species fed to the young, and indeed it would be dangerous to them (Porter, Audubon Mag., 1962:300–301). Furthermore, the bladders did not prove to be suitable prey, for the young could not swallow

them despite prolonged efforts. It is unusual for Common Terns to bring to their young food items that they themselves could not swallow, although they occasionally bring fish that are too wide or spiny for the young to swallow (Boecker, Vogelwelt, 89:221-225, 1968).

There was some evidence of a food scarcity at Monomoy at the time of these events. The amount of food brought by parent terns to chicks in my study-plot was generally less in late July than in early July 1973, and some chicks that had started to grow well declined and died late in the month. Hence, it is possible that the parents picked up the swim-bladders because they were unable to obtain suitable food. This proved to be a waste of time and effort by the terns, although at least one parent repeated the same behavior several times.

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**Monk Parakeets breeding in Buncombe County, North Carolina.**—A native of South America, the Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) has been imported in large numbers to the United States during the past decade for sale as a cage bird. Following accidental escape and intentional release, wild populations have become established in scattered localities, initially in New York and adjacent states (Bull. Linnæan Newsletter. Vol. 25, 1971; Briggs and Haugh, Kingbird. 23:3-13, 1973). Recent observations from Buncombe County, North Carolina indicate that a breeding population of Monk Parakeets is present in one of the interior river valleys of the southern Appalachian mountains.

Monk Parakeets were first reported in Buncombe County in May 1972, when several pairs were seen in West Asheville (elev. 2,200 ft.). Subsequently, numerous individuals, pairs, and large flocks have been observed in Enka (elev. 2,000 ft.), Asheville (elev. 2,100 ft.), Leicester (elev. 2,000 ft.), and Barnardsville (elev. 2,200 ft.). Breeding pairs, with typical bulky nests located in silos and on utility or telephone poles, have been observed in Barnardsville, with two nests in 1972 and two in 1973, and in West Asheville, with two nests in 1972 and one in 1973. Young were successfully fledged by at least three of the seven pairs, and photos of nests and adults have been sent to the National Photoduplicate File in Laurel, Maryland.

The increasing frequency of reports and evidence of successful nesting indicate that the species is presently well established in Buncombe County. There, the population is currently distributed within a 15-mile radius of Asheville, in the French Broad River valley and adjacent plateau, at elevations of 2,000 to 2,200 feet. This interior river basin is essentially separated from the adjacent piedmont and Appalachian Valley by mountain ranges of 3,500 to 6,000 feet in elevation, thus possibly restricting the movement of certain species into the region. Local pet store managers (pers. com.) in the Asheville area report selling Monk Parakeets during the 1960's and informed us of several incidents of accidental escape from private owners. These reports of escapes in this relatively isolated region suggest that the population is local in origin and not the result of an influx of parakeets dispersing from previously established concentrations elsewhere.