

Group fishing behavior in the Greater Yellowlegs: The active fishing of the Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucus*) has been casually described through the popular literature, and more recently treated in detail by Zusi (Wilson Bull., 80:491-492). Essentially the bird runs through the water with the lower mandible projecting into ("skimming") the water, and small fish are then caught, individually, and swallowed. Recently I made observations on this "ploughing" behavior, and two interesting questions presented themselves: (1) Is this habit widespread, and generally important to the ecology of the species?, and (2) Do individuals sometimes cooperate in group fishing?

On 16 August 1969 I watched individual Greater Yellowlegs ploughing in several areas of the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey. Each was widely separate from the others, and all seemed to be having rather low success. At least four birds were involved.

On 1 November 1969, at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, New York, a single bird was studied while it fished for 15 minutes in fairly deep water (almost up to its abdomen). Its foraging pattern was quite irregular, and sometimes, while running in zig-zags, its head was entirely submerged. It caught several small fish during the observations. Later in the day, a group of about 12 Greater Yellowlegs were noted ploughing *together* in a small pool; they moved back and forth in the water as a group, although they were not strongly cohesive. Small fish were caught frequently, and after each capture a bird would pause briefly to swallow and then resume ploughing with the group.

These observations, together with the notes of Zusi (ibid.) from Kansas and Virginia, suggest that this method of foraging may be widespread, and possibly common in some areas. This suggestion could be easily checked by observers in other parts of the country. It will be necessary to obtain stomach samples to evaluate the role of fishes in the overall diet, as invertebrates are also important, and might sometimes be taken during ploughing. Finally, it seems that even loose groups of birds might gain from a "mutual driving" of the fish, especially in pools or at shorelines, much as is observed with certain larger species of fish-eating birds. Such "co-operative" foraging behavior seems to be rare in shorebirds, although it might also occur with the phalaropes when many individuals are "spinning" close together.

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In Camille's Wake a Wide-a-wake: On August 23, 1969 I spotted a Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) on the dock at Great Gull Island, N.Y. Great Gull Island is located 7 miles ENE of Orient Point at the eastern end of Long Island, N.Y., and is the site of a large tern colony. Both Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougallii*) and Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) breed here.

I watched the Sooty Tern on the dock for about two hours. During this period it repeatedly cleared the area around it of Common and Roseate Terns which stood near by. The Sooty Tern would threaten the bird next to it and once it had flown would threaten the next and continue until it had cleared an area of about six feet on the dock. Occasionally the Sooty Tern flew but returned within a few seconds and would again clear the dock of other species.

John Bull (Birds of the New York Area, 1964 p. 250) states that the Sooty Tern is a very rare visitant here, occasionally sighted after hurricanes. The above sighting of the Sooty Tern was made shortly after hurricane Camille swept along our coast.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Bull for confirming identification of the Sooty Tern by checking the accompanying photograph, Grace Donaldson for contributing the picture and Helen Hays for helpful discussion of the note.

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