

Visitants to Great Gull Island, N.Y. during the Summer of 1971

Great Gull Island, located at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, between Plum Island and Fishers Island, is a research station of the American Museum of Natural History (see Duffy, "Kingbird," 1970). Several interesting records for the area were established at Great Gull Island during the summer of 1971. On August 11 a Great Cormorant was seen at close range off the eastern end of the island and was carefully studied through a telescope by Helen Hays. This date is nearly a month earlier than the earliest fall record for New York, an individual seen on Great Gull Island September 6, 1969. Several hundred of these birds winter on the pilings and along the rocky shores of the island.

Parasitic Jaegers regularly pass Great Gull Island during August, sometimes stopping to pursue terns, other times flying west towards Plum Island. The first jaegers this year were two that appeared on August 11, one day later than the first of 1970. On August 26 twenty Parasitic Jaegers were seen at once during a 360 degree scan around the island; the maximum for the New York area is thirty (cf. Bull, 1964).

Besides the breeding Common and Roseate Terns, several other species of tern have been noted this year. As in previous years, single Forster's Terns appeared at the end of the summer, resting on the dock among the Commons. Two Sooty Terns were found on August 28 after hurricane Doria, during which winds up to 70 mph were measured on the island. One was completely exhausted and was easily captured by hand. It was banded, photographed, and released. This represents the second known occurrence of a Sooty Tern on Great Gull Island, the first having appeared after hurricane Camille on August 23, 1969 (see Jenner, J., "Kingbird," 1969, Vol. 20, pp. 13-14). While Least Terns breed nearby on Gardiner's Island and on Long Island, the first Great Gull Island record was one which appeared this year on August 26. Royal Terns were seen three times during the summer. The first was seen by Mary LeCroy on the dock on July 27, and two were seen there on the following day. On August 26 another appeared on the dock. Black Terns were seen in greater numbers than during previous years, when no more than two were seen at once. On the evening of August 26 this year at least ten Black Terns came in to roost with the Commons and Roseates.

For birds not seen as a group, banding is the only way to determine accurately the number of any species found on the island at once. On August 22 seven Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were caught in two mist nets in one quarter acre of bayberry. The maximum reported for the New York area is eight, found at Long Beach, September 2, 1920 (Bull, 1964).

A Carolina Wren was netted and released after banding on August 19. It remained on the island four days and sang early one morning. Although known to nest on nearby Gardiner's Island, the Carolina Wren was found on Great Gull Island only once before, on July 12, 1969.

An adult female Tennessee Warbler was banded, photographed, and released on the island on July 14. The latest this species had been found previously in the New York City area was June 9, and its earliest appearance in the fall, August 9 (Bull, 1964).

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank all the Gull Island volunteers who watched for birds on the island and manned the mist nets. Miss Helen Hays and Dr. Kenneth C. Parkes made many helpful suggestions while this article was in preparation.

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FIELD NOTES

Winter Records of The Green Heron: The Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) is considered to winter principally in Mexico and Central America, although there are at least two winter records of this species as far north as Indiana: Indianapolis — January 3, 1916 and Goshen — March 18, 1918 (Bent, 1926). Bull (1964), however, considers the Green Heron to be casual as far north as Maryland and southern New York.

All published winter reports of this species have previously been from the south shore of Long Island: Queens — December 29, 1948; Baldwin — January 2, 1954 and Quogue — winter of 1961-62 (Bull, 1964). In addition one individual was noted on the Captree Christmas Bird Count in December, 1965 (Audubon Field Notes, 1966). Prior to the winter of 1971-72 there are two unpublished winter records for this species on Long Island's north shore: Shelter Island — December 29, 1941 and Orient — December 28, 1942 (Latham, 1972).

This winter (1971-72) there were three sight records of the Green Heron, all noted on the Smithtown Christmas Bird Count on the north shore of Long Island. One individual was noted along the east bank of the headwaters of the Nissequogue River while two additional individuals were noted along the banks of the fresh pond at Sunken Meadow State Park.

Undoubtedly mild winters are an important factor in the winter occurrence of this species. Latham notes that the temperature prior to and during the 1941 observation ranged from a maximum of 54° on December 24 to a low of 31° on December 29. Unfortunately weather data for the 1942 observation period is not readily available. December of 1971 was remarkable for its mild temperatures throughout the Christmas Count period, the temperature ranging in the low 40's on the Smithtown Count day (December 27).

The Green Heron presumably perishes with the on-set of the typically colder winter weather. Latham notes that a green heron was found dead on March 17, 1943 on the same marsh that the December 8 record occurred.

LITERATURE CITED

- Audubon Field Notes; vol. 20, No. 2: April, 1966.
Bent, A. C. 1926, *Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*, Dover Publications, New York.