



Fig. 1. American Avocet chick at Pea Island, N.C., June 1968. (Photo by William McVaugh Jr.)

- (5) Avocet—head and body stripes medium dark.
Stilt—head and body stripes more intense coloration.
- (6) Avocet—under-toe color pale fleshy-gray.
Stilt—under-toe color pale pink.

The toe color is the easiest and quickest way to identify the two species when there is an overlap in their breeding range, as at Pea Island.

[NOTE: While American Avocets have been observed at all seasons at Pea Island for several years, no positive evidence of nesting was available prior to this report. Thus, the avocet, which normally is a breeding bird of western North America (A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, 1957), can be added to the list of North Carolina's breeding species.—JFP]

Black-headed Gull in Eastern North Carolina

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On 29 and 31 January and 2, 3, and 4 February 1976, a Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) was observed at the Hudles Cut Ferry Terminal on the Pamlico River near Aurora, N.C. The gull was seen in good light on several occasions. It was smaller than a Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*). Key plumage features were a white head with a black spot behind the eye and a white tail with a wide black terminal band. The eyes were dark, the legs and feet red and the bill red with a dark tip. The wing pattern was that of an immature bird as illustrated in Robbins et al. (1966).

We concluded that the bird was a Black-headed Gull in subadult plumage. The red bill with black tip and the wide black tail band separated the bird from the very similar

Bonaparte's Gull (*I. philadelphia*).

This identification was supported by John Fussell, who saw the bird on 3 February. Photographs were secured by Chris Marsh on 4 February, and a color slide has been deposited at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History.

[NOTE: Since the time of the above observations, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds have moved to Oklahoma. Their present address was not available at press time.—EFP]

Burrowing Owl Photographed at Huntington Beach State Park, S.C.

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20 June 1977

On 24 June 1976, a Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*) was seen and photographed by me at Huntington Beach State Park, Georgetown County, S.C. (Chat 41:15). It was called to my attention by Mr. Heimerdinger, a member of CBC who was camped at the State Park.

The owl was at the north parking lot, and it had taken up temporary residence under a concrete slab that was once the cover of a septic tank. Mr. Heimerdinger and I were able to get quite close to the bird, which was giving the familiar "coo-o-o-ing" sound and bobbing up and down in typical Burrowing Owl fashion. The bird was flushed from its place just in front of the slab, whereupon it flew a short distance and on alighting, again gave the sounds and actions of the species. As I was called to Michigan that same day, I did not learn how long the owl stayed in the Park.

Photographs were taken, using a 300 mm lens on a Mamiya/Sekor camera at the closest focusing distance of about 4 m. The slides were sent to John Farrand Jr., at the American Museum of Natural History, in an attempt to determine the subspecific identification of the owl. Mr. Farrand stated that the bird was "almost certainly" the Florida subspecies, *S. c. floridana*, although he could not rule out the possibility of its being from outside the continental United States. He also stated that it definitely was not the western subspecies, *S. c. hypugaea*.

There are but three previous records of the Burrowing Owl in South Carolina. Sprunt and Chamberlain (South Carolina Bird Life, 1949, p. 306) list only a bird seen by Ivan R. Tomkins on 7 December 1943, at Bay Point, near Beaufort, S.C. This owl was identified by Sprunt and Chamberlain as a member of the western subspecies, *S. c. hypugaea*, on the basis that the Florida subspecies "... does not regularly occur north of central Florida and it is not known to be migratory, whereas the Western Burrowing Owl migrates more or less regularly southward after the breeding season." In the Supplement to the 1970 edition (p. 641) Burton refuses to give a subspecific designation. Tomkins (Oriole 26:2) saw another Burrowing Owl in the state on 3 November 1959, at the edge of US 17A, about 2 miles N of the Georgia line, Jasper County, S.C. A third owl was found by Perry Nugent on 30 December 1975, at the U.S. Vegetable Breeding Laboratory near Charleston, S.C. (Chat 40:72). These two birds were not identified to subspecies.

Without specimens, the identification of Burrowing Owl subspecies is difficult if not impossible. Consequently, the identity of the birds discussed herein will probably always remain uncertain. However, a Burrowing Owl collected by Paul Sykes on 14 February 1967, at Salvo, Dare County, N.C. (cited by Fussell and McCrimmon, Chat 38:41), proved to be a member of the Florida subspecies, *S. c. floridana*. This, coupled with the probable identity of the Huntington Beach State Park bird, increases the likelihood that all previous sightings of this species in the Carolinas represent *S. c. floridana*. The owl observed near Ft. Macon, Carteret County, N.C., by Fussell and McCrimmon during June, August, and September of 1972 (Chat 38:41) was not collected.