

upper part of the state. However, Sprunt and Chamberlain (South Carolina Bird Life, 1949, p. 215) state that the species does breed on the coast and list records from Beaufort and Charleston Counties. Burton (Supplement, South Carolina Bird Life, 1970, p. 598) provides additional nesting records for Berkeley and Dorchester Counties. He also states that nests containing eggs have been found as early as 14 March and as late as 9 July. This is supported by the two young I observed on 15 July.

Nocturnal Feeding of Gulls at a Lighted Pier

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On 4 December 1978, a flock of 1500 to 2000 gulls was observed from 2030 until 2230 off the end of the Crystal Fishing Pier at Wrightsville Beach, N.C. There were no fishermen on the pier, but the spotlight that illuminates the ocean at the end of the pier was turned on. This was the second day that 30-knot southwesterly winds had been blowing. The birds were feeding on small bait fish while hovering above the water at the end of the pier, and dropping back to rest on the surface of the water after feeding. The flock was composed mainly of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) with Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*) and an occasional Herring (*L. argentatus*) and Great Black-backed (*L. marinus*) present. One Royal Tern (*Sterna maxima*) was seen. Two additional small groups of 25 to 100 birds were also feeding beside the pier. At 2330 there were still about 1000 birds present, the majority of which were resting on the surface of the water.

These species are generally considered to be diurnal feeders. We have seen no other instance of the nocturnal attraction of such large numbers of gulls to feed on the schools of small fish regularly encountered adjacent to lighted piers along the North Carolina coast.

Franklin's Gull in Greenwood County, S.C.

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In the late afternoon of 2 April 1978, I was following my usual birding route along Lake Greenwood in Greenwood State Park, Greenwood County, S.C. It had been the hottest day of the year to date, with a high temperature of 82 degrees F, following a week-long period of unusually warm and dry weather. The sky was cloudless and there was still plenty of light available, even though it was only a half hour before sunset.

Looking north from the camping area, I saw a flock of approximately 350 gulls resting about 100 to 150 yards off shore. This is an unusually large number for April. The flock consisted of several Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*); roughly 310 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*); 35 Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*), many of which had almost completely black hoods; and one other gull.

The bird was intermediate in size between the Bonaparte's and the Ring-billeds, but closer to the Bonaparte's. The bill, too, was intermediate: shaped more like the Ring-billed's, but distinctly smaller relative to the size of the head. The blackish-red bill was, therefore, too slight to be that of a Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*). The black hood of the breeding plumage was complete. An almost complete white eye ring was very noticeable. The mantle was dark gray, much darker than that of either the Bonaparte's or the Ring-billed's. Separating the mantle color from the black wing tips was a broad band of white.

I saw the pattern of the opened wings briefly on three occasions, once when the bird stretched its wings and twice when it (and the rest of the flock) took flight. From above the

wings showed the classic field-guide pattern: the white band separating the black wing tips from the gray mantle color. From below, this white area looked like a translucent window, similar to that of the Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*).

These observations were made through an 80X Questar telescope. Because of the relatively small distance between me and the gull, the air turbulence caused by the warm weather was not a problem. Attempts to relocate the bird the next day failed.

The bird was clearly a Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*). There are two other records of this highly insectivorous prairie species from South Carolina: a bird observed by Harry LeGrand near Townville, Anderson County, on 8 May 1975 (Chat 39:92), and a bird discovered by the author and Lisa Lewis at Huntington Beach State Park, Georgetown County, on 26 September 1976 (Chat 41:96).

Diet of the Barn Owl on a South Carolina Barrier Island

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The examination of cast pellets has provided valuable dietary information for owls as well as data on the distribution and abundance of small mammals in coastal South Carolina (Nelson 1934, 1973). One of the most reliable species for pellet analysis is the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Formerly common in the coastal area, this species is now thought to be declining (Gauthreaux, in press) and is regarded as uncommon in the Cape Romain area (U.S. Department of Interior 1976).

Analysis of 60 Barn Owl pellets collected on Lighthouse Island in the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge on 16 June 1978 reveals a primary reliance on the Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) and the Rice Rat (*Oryzomys palustris*). Dietary components included remains of the following: 34 Meadow Voles, 8 Rice Rats, 2 Roof Rats (*Rattus rattus alexandrinus*), 1 Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) 1 Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), 1 marsh wren (*Cistothorus* sp.), 7 Fiddler Crabs (*Uca* sp.), 1 Paper Wasp (*Polistes* sp.), and 1 Marsh Periwinkle (*Littorina irrorata*).

Meadow Voles included in these samples are representatives of the only known coastal population in South Carolina (Golley 1966, Sanders 1978). It is of interest that this disjunct population was discovered on Lighthouse Island in 1933 (E.B. Chamberlain, unpublished, Charleston Museum files), and after a lapse of 45 years, both the Barn Owl and its unusual prey are still represented.

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