

# General Field Notes

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## Common Terns Foraging Over Land

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On various occasions on 5, 6, and 7 May 1981, we observed Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) foraging over sparsely vegetated road shoulders on Bodie and Pea Islands, Dare County, N.C. Individual birds and groups of two to five terns were seen hunting along the main road (NC 12) that runs the length of the islands. To the best of our knowledge there are no reported instances of this species feeding over non-aquatic habitats, although it is a well-known behavior in Forster's (*S. forsteri*), Gull-billed (*Gelochelidon nilotica*), and Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*).

The birds flew parallel to the road, into the wind, at an altitude of about 3 to 4 m and swooped down on potential prey. The terns were observed snatching food from the ground with their bills, but the prey items must have been small because we could not see them. After catching food the birds returned to their original altitude, without landing, and continued to patrol the road shoulder. Based on the number of feeding swoops, the prey items must have been quite abundant, and we surmise that they were newly emerging Orthopterans. Wax Myrtle (*Myrica* sp.) an other woody shrubs lined the road shoulders, so the birds confined their hunting to a rather narrow zone.

Although this seems like aberrant feeding behavior for a plunge-diving, surface-feeding tern, Lee observed this same behavior once before on Assateague Island, Worcester County, Maryland, in May 1974. A single bird was feeding over the open inner dune area near the north end of the island. In all cases the nearby waters were not so rough as to prohibit the birds from feeding in their conventional manner. It is not known if the individuals observed were breeding residents or spring migrants. In North Carolina and Maryland, Common Tern migration continues at least until the last week in May and local nesting is under way by the second week of the month. This is publication 1981-9 of the North Carolina Biological Survey.

## A Dark-phase Western Grebe from North Carolina

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On 28 February 1981, I observed a dark-phase Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) on Pamlico Sound near the Swan Quarter ferry landing in Hyde County, N.C. The bird was first seen about 0800 as it swam in the vicinity of a Double-crested