

## First Verified Record for Forster's Terns Nesting in S.C.

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During June 1987 we found three groups of nesting Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) on Cape Romain, S.C. Wilkinson and Steven Kyles discovered eight nests on 3 June 1987 on West White Banks. The Forster's Terns were associated with nesting Gull-billed Terns (*Sterna nilotica*), Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), and American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*). The highest nest count at West White Banks was nine on 8 June.

All Forster's Terns nests were placed on wrack (3-6 cm high) located on unvegetated sandbars above mean high water. None of the nests that we examined were elevated more than 10 cm, as has been observed in marsh-nesting Forster's Terns along the mid-Atlantic Coast (Can.J.Zool. 65:1417, 1987).

On 1 July we inspected other tern colonies in the north section of Cape Romain, and on Marsh Island discovered two pairs of Forster's Terns that were nesting in close association with Gull-billed Terns. One pair had two downy chicks, and the other pair was incubating three eggs. Two Forster's Terns nests were also found on Raccoon Key in association with Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*), Gull-billed Terns, Little Terns (*Sterna autillarum*), and Common Terns (*S. hirundo*). Only three nesting pairs of Forster's Terns remained on West White Banks. On 15 July 1987 Wilkinson, Sidney Gauthreaux and Will Post noted that Forster's Terns had left West White Banks and Marsh Island, but were still on Raccoon Key.

These observations represent the first verified nesting records of Forster's Terns in South Carolina. A previous nesting report from South Carolina exists, but its validity is uncertain. It is based on identification of a set of three eggs collected by M.T. Cleckley from Bird Bank (Cape Romain) on 24 June 1904 (Auk 62:639, 1945). As the collector did not identify the birds that had laid these eggs, and as there is a high degree of overlap in the size and coloration of Forster's Tern and Common Tern eggs, the identification of the clutch is questionable.

