

First Record of Common Terns Nesting in Illinois

For the last several years Common Terns have been seen about Waukegan in July, but apparently no one reported a nest.

In 1935 I visited the pond in the Public Service Grounds beside Lake Michigan with the Yard Superintendent, Mr. Arthur Heim. As we approached the lake shore a Common Tern suddenly scolded, then another. We searched the shore and nearby vicinity but found no nest. At one time six terns were scolding. Mr. Heim told me that they had nested there some time before. Since he described the nest as being hardly a nest at all, just a hollow in the sand, and mentioned that the down on the heads of the young birds is of different shades of color, some yellowish and some brown, I was convinced that he was right.

As soon as I was home from the 1936 banding trip I went to the pond. Before I reached the shore a Common Tern was scolding. It was soon joined by others until there were twenty-five in the air, all scolding. I stood still and soon saw a bird with a fish and watched it with my binoculars until the fish was fed to a young bird. Upon going to the spot I had a good look at the first young Common Tern on record in Illinois. Then I saw another, and a nest with eggs. There was a bunch of feathers where one recently had been killed and eaten. Cat



Photographs by W. I. Lyon.

Eggs and Young of Common Tern at Waukegan, Illinois, July 19, 1936.

tracks led from the spot to a rock pile. I rushed home for bands, the camera, and also a gun. On the way back I got Mr. Heim and some others to come and help. We soon found our birds and I photographed and then banded them. We found four nests with eggs, one nest had three. About that time we heard the gun. The boys claimed they had shot an animal in the rock pile.

When I went back two weeks later the terns had gone. The three eggs in the nest mentioned above had not hatched so I took them for the collection of the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

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