

## NOTES ON THE SUMMER BIRDS OF THE GASPE PENINSULA

By CHARLES W. TOWNSEND, M.D., BOSTON

(Continued from Vol. XXXIV, page 80)

The adults on alighting near their half grown young empty their stomach contents on the ground and the young eagerly swallow it. The young may often be seen practicing short flights on the top of the Rock, but when they once launch out from their nesting place they roost on the broken rock and beaches at the foot of the cliffs.

9. *Larus philadelphia*. Bonaparte's Gull.

On August 14th I saw two adults and four immature birds of this species in the Gaspé Basin, evidently migrants.

10. *Sterna hirundo*. Common Tern.

The only birds of this species I saw anywhere along the coast of the Peninsula were about a dozen at Cross Point on July 5th. Mr. Taverner does not note them.

11. *Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis*. Black Tern.

One seen August 27th in the lower part of the York River near Gaspé.

12. *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Leach's Petrel.

Breeding commonly in the clefts and holes in the top of the Gannet cliffs at Bonaventure Island.

13. *Sula bassana*. Gannet.

As already stated about 8,000 Gannets breed in the cliffs on the eastern side of Bonaventure Island. The great majority of the birds seen were in full adult plumage; about one in three or four hundred had black in the base of the wing, in the tail and scattered on the back. These, I suppose, are birds two years old.

Early in July nearly all the eggs had hatched, but I watched an adult on July 18th which was brooding an egg in the nest. When the bird raised itself I saw that one webbed foot nearly covered the egg. This singular habit has been noted in literature.

From time to time adults could be seen bringing rockweed in their bills and patching up their nests. The nests like the ledges were painted white with the droppings of the birds. The white downy young with black faces grew rapidly between the time of my first visit on July 10th and my last on August 3rd when they were nearly half as large as their parents.

The curious courtship ritual I have described at length in my paper on Courtship in Birds. This always takes place when a bird arrives at the nest to relieve its mate. It is evident that the sexes al-

ternate in feeding and brooding the young. The new arrival at the nest, after its mate has left, waddles around so that the young is in front of her breast. The young at once raises its black head and shows by its vibrating throat that it is calling for food. The parent often appears indifferent, preens her own feathers and the down of her offspring, gapes sleepily and darts her head angrily at a neighbor. The young become more insistent and tries to wedge open the bill of its mother. She at last gives a gulp, curves her head down, opens wide her bill and appears to swallow the head and neck of her hopeful. The process is soon repeated, the young always seem ready to disappear into the cavern of its parent's mouth.

Whether the great volume of noise that goes out from this ledge is the courtship song or not I can not say, but it is doubtless augmented by the calling of the young for food. It suggests thousands of rattling looms in a great factory, a rough vibrating pulsing sound, and may be written down *car-ra, car-ra, car-ra*.

Taking advantage of the strong sea breezes and of the currents deflected upwards by the cliffs, the Gannet is able to soar on rigidly outstretched wings for a long time without flapping. One, which I watched passing within a few yards of me, circled ten times to within a few feet of a ledge crowded with its kind, and each time he dropped his feet as if about to alight, but each time drew them up again and sailed by. Except for a momentary flutter just before each attempt to alight, his wings were held rigidly outstretched. The circle was one of three or four hundred yards in diameter. On each of the last three times he executed a smaller circle in addition, thus completing a figure of eight. On the eleventh attempt he dropped suddenly on the ledge close to his mate on her nest. The bill-shaking and bowing and caressing that went on was in the most spontaneous and eager fashion. They appeared over-joyed to meet again.

Before flying from the ledge the Gannet generally poises motionless for several moments with its eyes and bill pointed upwards, perhaps in order to watch for an opportunity to fly without colliding with another bird in the air. It then leaps clear of its companions and of the ledge, and with tail turned down as a brake, it swiftly descends until it gathers impetus enough to rise.

At Grand Grève in the early part of August I frequently saw Gannets singly or in groups of two