

nest. He circled me, with an eye always on me, but improving the time by collecting insects, now on the ground, now on the wing. After darting into the air for an insect, he would return repeatedly to the same perch. When I had moved to another position, he quickly darted to a saltbush, where I found a pair of young in the nest—still unfeathered. It was observed that the bird did not visit the nest following the capture of each insect taken, but waited until several were 'in hand'.

During early morning observations, some very close and long views of the male birds were had, owing to the habit of perching on the tip of a bush or tree, usually on a dry twig. The plaintive note is sounded at regular and frequent intervals, and the whole of the bird is moved during the note, with a slight but obvious lifting motion—as though the bird raised himself on his toes to assist the effort.

I understand that the birds have been plentiful near Red Cliffs, too. They have been seen and heard in all types of country about Ouyen—in saltbush, open timber, porcupine grass, desert (mixed dwarf pine, tea-tree, eucalypts, and other native shrubs) and on gypsum flats. They have been observed working over flowering mistletoe, as well as taking insects on the wing. They are still about (October 29), but, I believe, in diminished numbers.

## The Caspian Tern on Inland Waters

By NORMAN J. FAVALORO, Mildura, Vic.

On June 10, 1945, whilst driving a motor launch upstream on the Murray River near Bruce's Bend, a few miles from Mildura, I was surprised to see a Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) flying at an altitude of approximately one hundred feet directly overhead. It was the first of its kind I had seen in this district during the thirteen years I have been resident at Mildura. Later in the afternoon the bird flew low over the river and approached close enough for me to secure it for the National Museum reference collection.

The heavily-striated head indicated that the specimen was in mid-winter plumage. The eyes, feet, and tip of the bill were black, the remainder of the bill reddish-orange and the gape dark yellowish-orange. Unfortunately sexing was difficult and the skin was labelled '? male'.

The stomach contained a headless carp four inches long and the major portion of another almost as big. The most interesting feature of the bird itself was a very thick stump of a fish bone  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long deeply imbedded in the right side of the throat near the base of the upper mandible. The area surrounding the offending bone was inflamed and

the wound itself, which appeared to be an old one, was full of pus. A strong pair of pliers had to be used for the purpose of extracting the bone.

On returning late that evening to the Lock at Mildura where the launch was moored, another Caspian Tern was noted flying at tree-top height in a westerly direction downstream. The setting sun intensified the colour of the beak and made identification easy at a considerable distance even without the aid of binoculars.

After that a very careful watch for the birds was kept and on June 16 another was observed at Bruce's Bend. On July 15 four Caspian Terns spent the whole day fishing between the Lock and the Mildura Bridge. That was the last occasion on which birds were observed that season.

My next inland record was made at Oonabootra, south-west Queensland on September 7, 1946, in company with Messrs. A. J. Storer and C. E. Bryant and my son John. Oonabootra is a permanent water-hole, approximately seven miles long and situate on the Bulloo some 25 miles north-north-west of the Adelaide Gate. We were striking camp when our attention was drawn, by an unfamiliar raucous note, to a large tern flying 'upstream', but on the far side of the water-hole. From the size of the bird I assumed that it was a Caspian Tern, but all doubts were quickly set at rest about fifteen minutes later when two Caspian Terns, calling loudly, flew downstream and passed close to the spot where we were standing. The red bills were very prominent. Although we followed them down the water-hole for some considerable distance, the birds were not seen again.

On October 4 and 27, 1946, I had reason to visit Kerang for the week-ends and on each occasion I spent a full day on the lakes inspecting the rookeries of ibis, Royal Spoonbills, cormorants and Darters. The only terns noted on October 4 were Marsh Terns (*Chlidonias leucopareia*), but on October 27 two Caspian Terns were fishing all day in the deep waters of Reedy Lake. During the afternoon they did a considerable amount of diving and called frequently to each other.

The discovery of the two birds at Kerang induced me to look for the species again after my return to Mildura, but it was not until November 3 that I located two of them at Lake Ranferleigh.

On November 17 there were five on the lake in company with a small band of Red-necked Avocets (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*). This lake is very shallow and is composed of drainage water from neighbouring horticultural properties. The Terns spent most of the day standing on debris near the edge in water only a few inches deep. Although they were frequently in the air, I did not see them feeding on this occasion.