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Bonnie Fairbanks

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OSPREY CATCHES LEAST TERN IN FLIGHT

BONNIE FAIRBANKS

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, 1450 Merrihue Dr., Naples, FL 34102

On the morning of 29 June 2006 on the north end of Keewaydin Island near Naples, FL, I observed an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) capture a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) in flight. The incident began when a group of approximately 30-50 Least Terns took flight from the beach. The terns scattered in various directions, calling as they commonly do while in flight. An Osprey was flying from the water toward the land when the terns began flying. As it came near the group of terns, one of the terns flew directly in front of the Osprey. The Osprey caught the tern in its talons, doubling its wingbeat once as it did so. With the tern in its talons, it continued on as before and flew out of sight over a house. At no time did the terns appear to give the Osprey any special attention; they neither mobbed nor avoided it. The Osprey did not seem to be hunting the terns, because it did not change direction to fly toward them. The Osprey is not a known source of mortality for Least Terns (Thompson et al. 2005). Ospreys eat fish almost exclusively, and the anecdotal observations of Ospreys eating birds do not include Least Terns (Wiley and Lohrer 1973). I also could find no observations of birds caught on the wing by an Osprey.

LITERATURE CITED

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- WILEY, J. W., AND F. E. LOHRER. 1973. Additional records of non-fish prey taken by Ospreys. *Wilson Bulletin* 85:468-470.