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Longevity of Elegant Terns

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ERRATUM

Please note that in Robert P. Yunick's manuscript, "Observations on a Six-year Nesting History of a Female Eastern Phoebe," in *NABB* 35:131-136, Table 1 (p. 132) shows the superscript "1" in the column heading, which is incorrect. It does not apply to the entire column, only to the year 1996 entry. In all other years, 1997-2001, he monitored egg laying as it occurred, thus had definitive egg counts. Only in 1996 did he discover the nest after egg hatching and inferred four eggs based on the four nestlings. The editors apologize for this editing error.

Longevity of Elegant Terns

Elegant Terns (*Thalasseus elegans*) currently breed in three colony sites in southern California ranging from Los Angeles Harbor south to San Diego Bay (Burness et al. 1999, Collins 2006). Banding studies of Elegant Terns and Royal Terns (*T. maximus*) in southern California colonies suggest that annual survival is high (>80%) and that some individuals should have long life spans (>20 years) (Collins and Doherty 2006). However, band wear and possible band loss has been recorded for Elegant Terns (Collins 2007) and would expectedly reduce the likelihood of documenting the survival of older individuals in the population. Even so, some bands have remained on these terns and we report here the recent recovery of seven bands from older individuals.

Between 1988 and 2003, 15,956 pre-flying (local) Elegant Tern chicks were banded in the nesting colonies at Bolsa Chica State Ecological Reserve (=Bolsa Chica) in coastal Orange County and at Los Angeles Harbor in Los Angeles County. The seven bands reported here were all recovered from adult Elegant Terns found dead with four of the seven being found in the breeding colony in South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge (=San Diego). Three others were found away from nesting colonies. One was found at Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, about 6.5 km north of Bolsa Chica. A second one was found at Lagunita de El Cipres, 1.6 km south of Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico (Table 1). The third was found just north of Oceanside, near the mouth of the Santa Marita River on Camp Pendleton. All bands showed wear, mostly on the inner surface and bottom edge but were completely legible, even the oldest one (Fig. 1).

Table 1. Recent band recoveries from Elegant Terns in southern California.

Band No.	Banding Site	Date	Recovery Site	Date	Age at Recovery
1063-36560	Bolsa Chica	7/3/1999	Seal Beach, CA	1 Jun 2010	11 yr 0 mo
1043-97381	Bolsa Chica	7/5/1997	San Diego, CA	19 May 2010	12 yr 11 mo
1043-90291	Bolsa Chica	7/8/1995	San Diego, CA	26 Apr 2008	12 yr 10 mo
1043-92135	Bolsa Chica	7/6/1996	Ensenada, MX	10 May 2010	13 yr 11 mo
1043-94518	Bolsa Chica	7/6/1996	San Diego, CA	5 May 2010	13 yr 11 mo
1043-92410	Bolsa Chica	7/6/1996	Oceanside, CA	7 Jul 2010	14 yr 0 mo
1373-72369	Bolsa Chica	7/15/1989	San Diego, CA	5 May 2010	20 yr 11 mo



Fig. 1. Band recovered from Elegant Tern after 20 yr and 11 mo.

The oldest individual in this group was 20 yr 10 mo old when found. This is a new longevity record for the Elegant Tern. The oldest previously documented individual was banded on Isla Rasa, Mexico, on 24 Jun 1991 and found dead near Coronado, CA, on 2 Jun 2007 when 16 yr old (Lutmerding and Love 2010). This is < 9.25 km from the breeding colony of Elegant Terns in San Diego. Inter-annual movement of Elegant Terns among the southern California colonies is frequent (Collins 2006) but this is the first documentation of interchange of individuals between breeding colonies in Mexico and a southern California site during the breeding season.

Unfortunately, not enough bands have been recovered for a detailed survival analysis. However, the few that have been found suggest that adult survival of Elegant Terns is similar to that recorded for other large terns (Collins and Doherty 2006, Weske 2010). In South Australia, the related Crested Tern (*T. bergii*) has been recorded living to 32 yr and six other individuals to ages of 19 to 28 yr (Waterman and Murray 2008). First year survival of Royal Terns nesting in association with Elegant Terns in the southern California colonies was 86% and proportion of birds > 3 yr of age was estimated to be about 95% (Collins and Doherty 2006).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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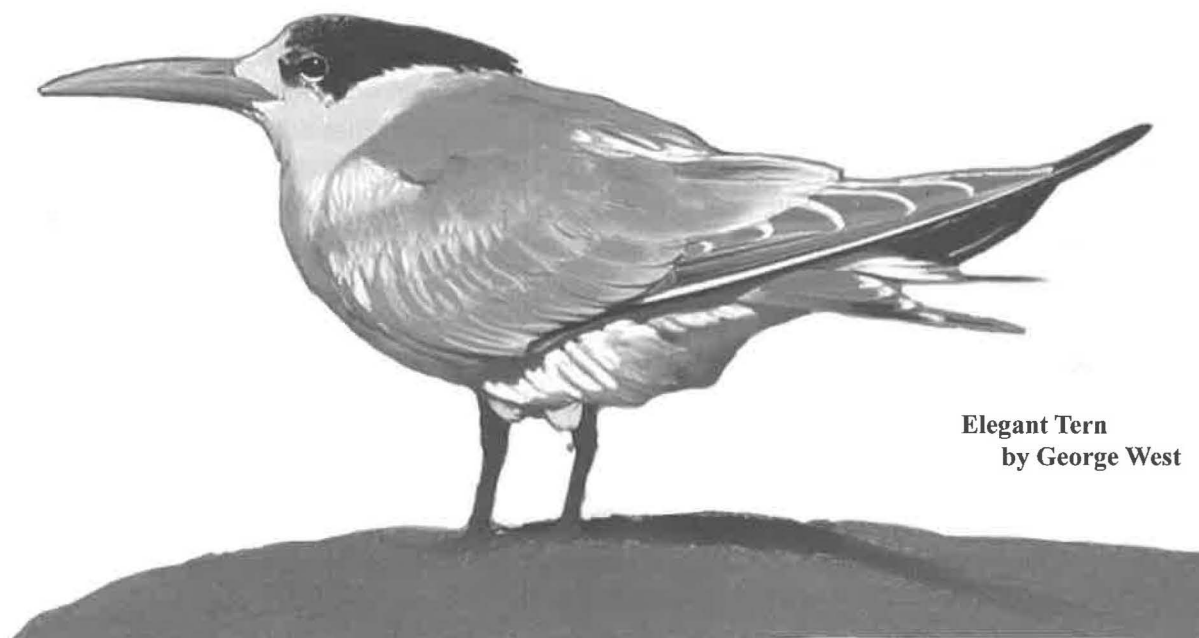
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Elegant Tern
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