

STERNULA NEREIS, *Gould.*

Australian Little Tern.

Sternula Nereis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part X. p. 140.

Little Tern, Colonists of Western Australia.

THIS delicately coloured and elegant little Tern inhabits many of the low sandy islands in Bass's Straits, whence its range extends along the south coast to Western Australia. I observed several pairs on the small island opposite the settlement on Flinders' Island, where they appeared to be breeding. It would seem however, to be much more numerous on the western coast, for during the breeding-season, which is the month of December, it congregates in immense flocks on Rottnest and Garden Islands. It makes no nest, but lays its two eggs in a depression on the sand or shingle. Like that of other Terns, the food of this species principally consists of the smaller oceanic fishes, which it captures with apparent ease, plunging down into the water from a considerable height with such unerring aim that it rarely misses the object.

The *Sternula Nereis* is a beautiful representative in the southern ocean of the Little Tern of the European seas; the habits, actions and economy of both being precisely alike.

The eggs are two in number, of a pale stone-colour, in some instances marked all over, but more thickly at the larger end, with dark umber-brown; in others very largely blotched with the same colour; they are one inch and three-eighths long by seven-eighths broad.

Crown of the head, back of the neck, circle round and a spot before the eye black; forehead white; back and wings delicate silvery grey; outer web of the external primary dark grey at the base, gradually passing into light grey at the tip; all the under surface, rump and tail pure white; irides black; bill, tongue and feet rich orange-yellow.

The figures are male and female of the natural size.