

"At Zana," says Mr. Salvin, "we found it breeding, a considerable number frequenting the marsh. Numerous as the bird was, we only obtained five eggs; and these were not collected by ourselves. In fact we left Zana before the birds began to sit, and consequently were never able to determine the exact locality where they breed; but it is probably on some of the small mounds on the north side of the marsh, which stand like islands out of the swampy ground. These Terns feed over the grass-fields and open land, hovering and descending as our more familiar species do on the English coast over a shallow, their food being grasshoppers and beetles, which there swarm."

Specimens were obtained by Mr. Tristram on sand-spits and small lagoons north of Beyrout, in Palestine; Mr. Wright states that three magnificent examples were killed at Malta, in May 1864; Lord Lilford observed that the species was not uncommon at Butrinto, in the Ionian Islands, in January, February, and March; Messrs. Elwes and Buckley found it to be common on the coast of Albania, in summer; and Mr. W. H. Simpson has given the following interesting account respecting the bird in Western Greece:—

The most numerous of all the birds, during the latter half of May, on the lagoon of Mesolonghi are the Terns, and notably *Sterna hirundo*, *minuta*, and *anglica*. If unmolested, their numbers would be enormous, as there are probably few places in the Mediterranean more adapted by nature for these birds, if innumerable flat islets and sandy-spits washed by an immense extent of very shallow salt water abounding in fish can be any inducement to their undertaking the duties of incubation. But now that the towns of Mesolonghi and *Ætolico* are beginning to stir, and the fisheries to be more looked after, all the birds will suffer from the increase of activity. The eggs of *Sterna anglica* especially are much eaten by the natives. It was from this circumstance that I came to discover their principal colony, as the following extract from my note-book will show:—'On the 23rd I started in my monoxylon with Vitalis and a native to search the salt lagoon and the islets south-east of the town, my chief object being to discover the quarters of *Sterna anglica*, which was flying about in every direction. This bird had caused me many a fruitless ride across the high plains of the Atlas during the summer of 1857; and it now seemed likely that I was to have another equally wild-goose chase across the lagoon and mud-flats of Mesolonghi, under the equally powerful sun of Greece. Already several days had elapsed since we first noticed them, and still we were unable to gain any satisfactory tidings of their mysterious retreat. My associates became very mutinous in consequence of our prolonged ill-success; so I directed the boat to be landed at a fisherman's hut, outside the main group of islets, where some fish was roasted to appease their hunger and ill-temper. While this was being prepared, the usual questions, of course, were put, and elicited the usual reply in the negative. 'Where do these broken shells come from, then?' 'Oh! they come from a long way off; and the birds won't lay any more.' 'Wouldn't twenty *lepta* per egg induce the birds to alter their determination?' 'They couldn't lay upon trust; part of the money must be paid down.' So the fisherman's boy agreed to try, and our monoxylon set off towards the outer spit, which was searched without success. On returning to the islet, I was much surprised at seeing a straw hat, filled with eggs of *Sterna anglica*, awaiting our inspection. Late as it was, I made the boy take me to the place, where I had the satisfaction of seeing the bird in great numbers, and succeeded in finding four nests, two of which, with their full complement of eggs, were taken then and there.' The greater number of the nests were on two of the innermost islets of the group. Generally they were placed on the raised outer edge, which, in case of flood, would remain longest high and dry. The eggs were deposited upon the sand or soil, in a depression slightly lined with a few bits of dead grass—and are not easily detected, as their colours blend with surrounding objects. The birds appear to commence incubation simultaneously, or nearly so, as most of the nests contained eggs pretty fresh. They did not evince the anxiety which many Terns do about their eggs, but simply contented themselves with flying in a body at a great height over the islands. I strongly suspect that in these hot countries the Terns do not care to sit upon their eggs throughout the day; and this may be the reason why one often sees flocks of *Sterna anglica* feeding miles away from head quarters."

Mr. Jerdon says:—"This Tern is exceedingly abundant all over India, frequenting tanks, marshes, and rivers, and occasionally hunting over the fields. It feeds alike on aquatic food and on grasshoppers, beetles, and other insects, and is a noisy bird."

The eggs are one inch and seven eighths long, by an inch and five sixteenths in breadth; the ground-colour fine buff, spotted all over with irregularly shaped spots of dark brown, rufous, and purplish, the lighter tints appearing as if beneath the surface.

The sexes are alike in plumage at the respective seasons; that is, their heads are jet-black in summer, and almost spotless white in winter. The young, on the other hand, vary very materially from youth to maturity. The one figured is, perhaps, a month or five weeks old; and its differences from the adult will be readily perceptible on reference to the accompanying Plate.

The figures represent an adult male and a young bird, about the size of life.