

## LITTLE TERN BANDING PROGRESS.

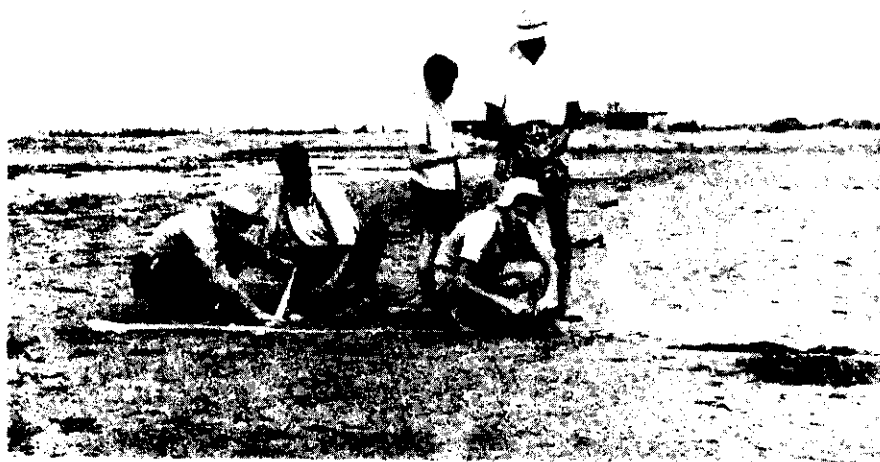
C.B.Campion, Abbotsford. N.S.W.

The 1963 Season, year 6 of the study was highly successful. The need for the survey to embrace more colonies, thereby increasing the numbers of banded individuals, and the desirability of placing bands on some, at least, of the many non-breeding birds also present during the spring and summer were mentioned in an earlier article (The Bird Bander, Vol.1.No.6, September, 1963). Progress was made in both of these directions in addition to the normal work at Mascot.

At Port Kembla the old and well-respected firm of Gibson and Sefton turned up a large breeding colony (48 nests) and did a characteristically thorough job. Besides adding 55 new adults and 82 chicks to the total stock of banded Little Terns, they obtained six valuable retraps - all banded at Mascot. Four of these were reported in "Recovery Round-Up" (Vol.1.No.7 December, 1963).

The Mascot colony, which has declined slightly in recent seasons, seemed to consist of not more than 15 pairs.

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Setting the cannon net. The white line of net can be seen extending towards the background with the cannons in position. From the left: the author, Ted Cramer Roberts, Trevor Lane, Chris Cameron, Cec Cameron (standing).

Photo: S.G.Lane.

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One of these chose to nest in a section of the airport which was inaccessible due to its proximity to the landing strips. Two others laid their eggs too late to complete the breeding cycle and deserted after only a few days incubation and before any attempt had been made to trap them. The remaining 12 pairs of adults were caught and consisted of 19 banded birds from previous seasons and 5 new individuals. The colony hatched a total of 28 chicks and 25 of these were banded.


An attack was made on the problem presented by the non-breeding birds. A cannon net was obtained and some imitations of Little Terns were made as decoys. Two expeditions employing this method resulted in the capture, examination and banding of 10 birds in non-breeding plumage. Despite detailed examination in the hand, they remain something of an enigma. Measurements revealed that fully half possessed bills quite as long as the breeding birds, although wing dimensions were smaller. Whilst the problem still remains, at least a start has been made. The method used for catching the non-breeders, though rather cumbersome, obviously can be made to work, and with persistence should eventually bring results. Next year the lessons learned should enable us to capture a larger number of these enigmatic Little Terns.

Experience with breeding birds indicates that adults of the species have a reasonably long life expectancy and it is hoped that this will help a fair sample of banded individuals to accumulate even though the numbers banded each year may be quite small.

Incidentally the cannon net demonstrated its suitability for catching waders by bagging nearly 50 Little Stints as a by-product.

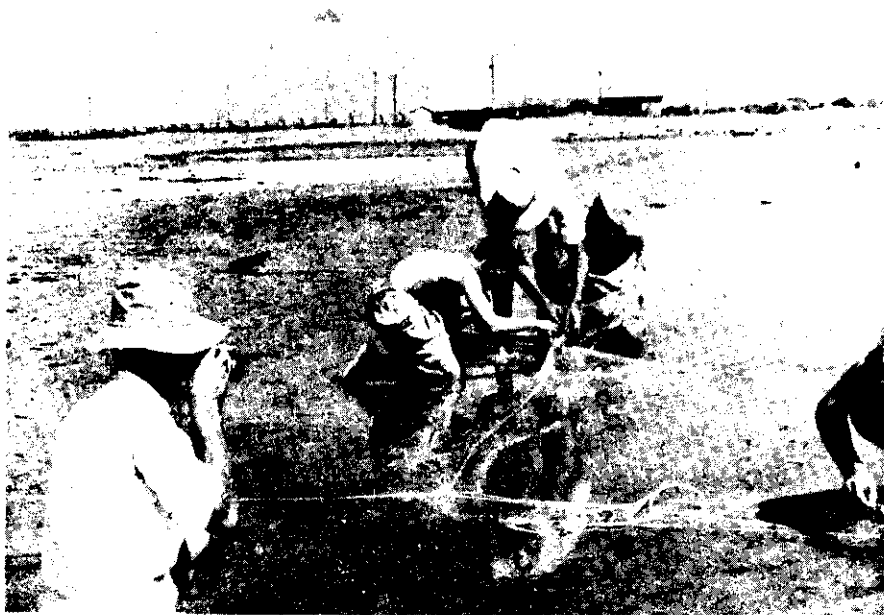
From John Liddy comes news of a breeding place not previously recorded. John has lately moved from Tasmania to the north coast of New South Wales. At Pottsville (apparently not far from his home at Kingscliff) he came across a small colony consisting of some 2 to 4 pairs which the locals tell him nest there regularly. In his note telling of the occurrence John expressed surprise at the royal welcome he received. Apparently he was not expecting to be anointed, but this is customary with Little Terns, and should be accepted with dignity by the anointee. Besides it puts life, Life, LIFE into dull listless hair!

Anyway John, many thanks for a useful piece of information.



Ready for firing - decoys in position.

Photo: S.G.Lane.



Removing Little Terns from the cannon net.  
Ron Mellor (with camera), Trevor Lane, Cec  
Cameron and the author.

Photo: S.G.Lane.