

## NESTING RECORDS FOR LAUGHING GULLS AND CASPIAN, FORSTER'S, AND GULL-BILLED TERNS IN ALABAMA

John and Beverly Winn

On 10 September 1984 my wife, Beverly, and I attended a presentation by Mr. Dwight Cooley of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on birds nesting on Gaillard Island in Mobile Bay, Mobile County, Alabama. Mr. Cooley stated that Gaillard Island was the first recorded nesting site in Alabama for the Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*), and Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*). He further indicated that the island was the site of the first substantial breeding colony of Gull-billed Terns (*Sterna nilotica*) in Alabama and that he expected Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) to begin nesting there in the future.

After hearing Mr. Cooley's presentation, further information was sought in Imhof (1976) and Clapp et al. (1983). I then reviewed my notes and found that on 15 July 1979, while conducting a shorebird survey for the Mahanomet Bird Observatory on Blakely Island in Polecat Bay in Mobile, Co., Beverly and I had recorded a large colony of Laughing Gulls (229), Forster's Terns (12), Caspian Terns (340), and Gull-billed Terns (64) nesting in the ALCOA Ponds. Nesting with them were Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*) (100), Black skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) (56) and Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) (33). All seven species had eggs and young in all stages of development. Our records show that the birds were not present in 1978, nor have they returned anytime since 1979.

Only after hearing Mr. Cooley's talk did we realize that our sightings represented the first nesting records for Laughing Gulls and Caspian Terns, and for substantial nesting by Forster's and Gull-billed Terns in Alabama.

Clapp, R.B., D. Morgan-Jacobs, and R.C. Banks. 1983. Marine Birds of the Southeast United States and Gulf of Mexico, Part 3, Charadriiformes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C., xvi & 553 pp.

Imhof, T.A. 1976. Alabama Birds, 2nd ed. Univ. of Ala. Press, University, Ala.