

A BIRD VISITOR FROM FINLAND

by Richard French

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A most interesting and unusual record was recently brought to my notice through the kindness of Roland Staav, a Swedish ornithologist who visited Trinidad and Tobago late in 1974.

On 8 February 1970 Mr. Joseph Nandalal discovered on the sea-coast at Chaguanas, Trinidad, a bird which he called a "seagull" – a popular local name for any white seabird. It was exhausted and hungry and he cared for it. Its leg bore a ring (or band) with a number which Mr. Nandalal sensibly reported. It turns out that the bird was a Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*, ringed as a nestling by Mr. Olof Sjoblom on 2 July 1968 at Trutgrund, Korpo, Finland. This place seems to be an island just off S.W. Finland, situated at 60.04 north latitude and 21.39 east longitude, some 7000 miles by direct flight from Trinidad.

Though Mr. Sjoblom was not sure whether the nestling he ringed was a Common Tern or possibly the very similar Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*, it seems likely for several reasons that the former identification is correct.

Common Terns are indeed common visitors to our coasts during the northern winter. In fact, the massive ringing campaign conducted with this species in North America, especially in Massachusetts, has produced nearly 400 recoveries from Trinidad and Tobago of birds ringed in the New World breeding colonies. This is in no way surprising, as the species is known to winter as far south as Peru, and Argentina.

But to my knowledge this is the first record of an European-ringed bird of this species being recovered in the South American region. However, birds of this genus are notoriously long-distance travellers, the Arctic Tern being generally known to migrate 14,000 miles each year.

Two other European-ringed birds, both herons, have been recovered from Trinidad during the last twenty years, one from France and one from Spain. Each constitutes the only record for the species known to have visited Trinidad. In addition, Mr. Staav informs me that a Finnish-ring Parasitic Jaeger, *Stercorarius parasiticus*, has been recovered near Rio de Janeiro. It certainly makes one wonder where all our visitors come from!