

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SEA-BIRDS OF ST. GILES

by ARIE L. SPAANS.

(Geertruidastraat 26, Paramaribo, Surinam)

Recently J.J. Dinsmore and R.P. French (Wilson Bulletin 81: 460-463, 1969) reviewed what is known about the avifauna of the St. Giles Islands off the northeast coast of Tobago. Since they state that much remains to be learned on the bird life of these islands, it may be useful to give here my observations on sea-birds made during two visits to the islands on 11 and 13 April 1971. On the first day I landed at the only accessible place at the west side of the main island, where two hours were spent. On the second day the main island and the outlying rocks were circled by boat. Mr. B.S. Ramdial, Chief Game Warden of the Forest Division, gave permission to enter the St. Giles Game Sanctuary, which is gratefully acknowledged. For a description of St. Giles the reader is referred to Dinsmore and French (loc. cit.).

My estimates of the numbers of sea-birds are as follows: Red-billed Tropicbird, **Phaethon aethereus**. At the most some tens were seen around the islands. We did not observe any indication of breeding.

Red-footed Booby, **Sula sula**. On 11 April a few hundred nests with large young were seen in the brush on the slopes of the western end of the main island. The number of nests for the whole island group, however, possibly may have been about 750, which exceeds previous estimates (cf. Dinsmore and French, l.c.).

Brown Booby, **Sula leucogaster**. Perhaps a hundred birds nested or had nested on the outlying rocks on the northern and western sides.

Magnificent Frigatebird, **Fregata magnificens**. Many were seen soaring over the main island. Since I could not reach the breeding sites, I am not sure whether or not the birds occupied nests.

Laughing Gull, **Larus atricilla**. On 11 April twice I chased a small group of Laughing Gulls from the top of the main island. The birds were alarmed and their behaviour suggested they were in breeding condition, but no nests were found (see also Dinsmore and French, l. c.).

Bridled Tern, **Sterna anaethetus**. On 11 April some birds were seen near the landing place on the main island, but no nests were found. On 13 April some tens were seen around the islands.

Sooty Tern, **Sterna fuscata**. On both days only a few birds were seen around the islands.

Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*. On 11 April I found many nests in the trees and thick masses of cactus on the slopes of the main island and several thousands of nests may have been present there. The nests contained eggs and small young, but more nests with young than with eggs were found, indicating that most birds started breeding in the first half of March, which is earlier than recorded by G.A.C. Herklots (The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. London, Collins, 1961) and Dinsmore and French (l. c.). On 11 April I caught two noddies on their nests with small young; the adults had both just started their primary moult; the innermost primary was new, while the rest were old or growing. The finding of moulting noddies while breeding is in accord with that of French (in litt.) on Soldado Rock off Trinidad and that of D.F. Dorward and N.P. Ashmole (Ibis 103 : 447-457, 1963) on Ascension Island.