

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SUBSPECIES OF THE
AMERICAN LEAST TERN.

BY EDGAR A. MEARNS.

The least tern, *Sterna antillarum* (Lesson) was described from Guadeloupe Island, West Indies, in the year 1847. The Pacific Coast form has apparently never been recognized and is here described as follows:

***Sterna antillarum browni* new subspecies.**

BROWN'S TERN.

Type-specimen.—Adult male, Cat. No. 134,773, U. S. Nat. Mus.; collected on its breeding-ground, near Monument No. 258, Mexican Boundary Line, on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, in San Diego County, California, July 12, 1894, by Edgar A. Mearns. (Original number, 11,259.)

Subspecific characters.—Slightly smaller than *Sterna antillarum antillarum* (Lesson), from which it also differs as follows: Black of crown prolonged backward in an occipital crest which occupies the middle of the upper neck; three outer primaries usually black except on the inner border of their inner webs; upper parts darker gray; under parts more grayish (less pure white); bill usually more narrowly tipped with black, often without any.

Measurements.—Type (taken by the author from the fresh specimen).—Length, 228 mm.; alar expanse, 522; wing, 181; tail, 78; culmen (chord), 29.5; tarsus, 16; middle toe, together with its claw, 16. Average measurements of three adult male topotypes (skins).—Wing, 166; tail, 75.7; culmen, 28.2; tarsus, 14.3; middle toe, 12.2. Averages of two adult female topotypes (skins).—Wing, 166.2; tail, 75; culmen, 24.5; tarsus, 14; middle toe, 11.5.

*Measurements of *Sterna antillarum antillarum* (Lesson)*.—Averages of nine adult males from the Atlantic shores of the United States (skins).—Wing, 168.1; tail, 82; culmen, 28.8; tarsus, 14.6; middle toe, 12.9. Averages of ten adult females from the Atlantic coast of the United

States (skins).—Wing, 162.3; tail, 71.2; culmen, 27.3; tarsus, 14.8; middle toe, 12.2.

Remarks.—This form is named in honor of Mr. Edward Johnson Brown, who has contributed so largely to the collection of birds in the United States National Museum, from both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America.



Mearns, Edgar Alexander. 1916. "Description of a new subspecies of the American least tern." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 29, 71–72.

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