under parts dull greyish-white, as are the upper parts, including the tail; the hind part of the head streaked with dusky, on the back and rump the feathers with a curved marginal band of greyish-brown; primary quills greyish-brown, the outer two darker. At this period the tail is even, each feather narrowly margined with greyish-white.

In a male bird the tongue is 10 twelfths long, slender, triangular, tapering to a point, horny beneath, emarginate and papillate at the base. On the palate are five longitudinal ridges. The posterior aperture of the nares is linear, 7 twelfths long. The œsophagus is 4 inches 2 twelfths long, very wide, its average diameter on the neck $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, within the thorax 9 twelfths; it is exceedingly thin and delicate, its muscular fibres scarcely apparent, unless closely examined. The proventriculus is only a quarter of an inch long. The stomach is 9 twelfths long, 8 twelfths broad, its lateral muscles of considerable size, the cuticular lining dense, tough, longitudinally rugous, and of a reddish-brown colour, as in Gulls. Contents of stomach and œsophagus, small fishes, one of them 2 inches long. The intestine is 14 inches long, its diameter $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths. The cœca are 2 twelfths long, nearly 1 twelfth in diameter.

The trachea is 2 inches and 4 twelfths long, its diameter 2 twelfths at the top, diminishing to 1 twelfth; its rings about 105, unossified; its lateral muscles moderate, as are the sterno-tracheal, and single pair of inferior laryngeal. The bronchial half-rings about 25.

THE NODDY TERN.

+*STERNA STOLIDA*, Linn.

PLATE CCCCXL.—MALE.

About the beginning of May, the Noddies collect from all parts of the Gulf of Mexico, and the coasts of Florida, for the purpose of returning to their breeding places, on one of the Tortugas called Noddy Key. They nearly equal in number the Sooty Terns, which also breed on an island a few miles distant. The Noddies form regular nests of twigs and dry grass, which they place on the bushes or low trees, but never on the ground. On visiting their island on the 11th of May, 1832, I was surprised to see that

many of them were repairing and augmenting nests that had remained through the winter, while others were employed in constructing new ones, and some were already sitting on their eggs. In a great many instances, the repaired nests formed masses nearly two feet in height, and yet all of them had only a slight hollow for the eggs, broken shells of which were found among the entire ones, as if they had been purposely placed there. The birds did not discontinue their labours, although there were nine or ten of us walking among the bushes, and when we had gone a few yards into the thicket, thousands of them flew quite low over us, some at times coming so close as to enable us to catch a few of them with the hand. On one side might be seen a Noddy carrying a stick in its bill, or a bird picking up something from the ground to add to its nest; on the other several were seen sitting on their eggs unconscious of danger, while their mates brought them food. The greater part rose on wing as we advanced, but re-alighted as soon as we had passed. The bushes were rarely taller than ourselves, so that we could easily see the eggs in the nests. This was quite a new sight to me, and not less pleasing than unexpected.

The Noddy, like most other species of Terns, lays three eggs, which average two inches in length, by an inch and three-eighths in breadth, and are of a reddish-yellow colour, spotted and patched with dull red and faint purple. They afford excellent eating, and our sailors seldom failed to collect bucketsful of them daily during our stay at the Tortugas. The wreckers assured me that the young birds remain along with the old through the winter, in which respect the Noddy, if this account be correct, differs from other species, the young of which keep by themselves until spring.

At the approach of a boat, the Noddies never flew off their island, in the manner of the Sooty Terns. They appeared to go farther out to sea than those birds, in search of their food, which consists of fishes mostly caught amid the floating sea-weeds, these Terns seizing them, not by plunging perpendicularly downwards, as other species do, but by skimming close over the surface in the manner of Gulls, and also by alighting and swimming round the edges of the weeds. This I had abundant opportunities of seeing while on the Gulf of Mexico.

The flight of this bird greatly resembles that of the Night Hawk when passing over meadows or rivers. When about to alight on the water, the Noddy keeps its wings extended upwards, and touches it first with its feet. It swims with considerable buoyancy and grace, and at times immerses its head to seize on a fish. It does not see well by night, and it is perhaps for this reason that it frequently alights on the spars of vessels, where it sleeps so sound that the seamen often catch them. When seized in the hand, it utters a rough cry, not unlike that of a young American Crow taken from

the nest. On such occasions, it does not disgorge its food, like the Cayenne Tern and other species, although it bites severely, with quickly repeated movements of the bill, which, on missing the object aimed at, snaps like that of our larger Fly-catchers. Some which I kept several days, refused all kinds of food, became dull and languid, and at length died.

STERNA STOLIDA, Bonap. Syn., p. 356.

NODDY, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 285.

NODDY TERN, *Sterna stolidus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iii. p. 516; vol. v. p. 642.

Male, $16\frac{4}{12}$, 32.

Abundant on the Gulf of Mexico during the whole year. Breeds in vast multitudes on the Tortugas Keys.

Adult Male.

Bill longer than the head, strong, slender, nearly straight, compressed, very acute. Upper mandible with the dorsal line slightly arched, the ridge broad and convex at the base, narrowed towards the end, the sides convex, the edges sharp and inflected, the tip acute. Nasal groove extended to beyond half the length of the bill, slightly deflected towards the edge; nostrils sub-medial, linear, direct, pervious. Lower mandible with the angle very narrow, acute, extending to the middle, the dorsal line straight, or very slightly concave, the sides convex, the sharp edges inflected, the tip extremely acute.

Head of moderate size, oblong, compressed; neck of moderate length; body slender; feet very short, rather stout. Tibia bare for a short space; tarsus very short, roundish, covered anteriorly with small scutella, laterally and behind with reticulated scales; toes slender, the first very small, the third longest, the fourth nearly as long, the second much shorter, all scutellate above, the anterior united by reticulated webs, having an incurved margin; claws curved, compressed, acute, that of hind toe smallest, of middle toe by much the largest, and having the inner edge thin and dilated.

Plumage soft, close, blended, very short on the head; the feathers in general broad and rounded. Wings very long, narrow, and pointed; primary quills tapering but rounded, the first longest, the rest rapidly graduated; secondaries short, broad, rather acute, the inner more tapering. Tail long, cuneate, of twelve tapering rounded feathers.

Bill black. Iris brown. Feet dull brownish-red, the webs dusky, the claws black. The general colour is sooty brown; the primaries and tail-feathers brownish-black; the upper part of the head greyish-white; a black spot anterior to and over the eye.

Length to end of tail $16\frac{4}{12}$, to end of wings $16\frac{1}{12}$, to end of claws $13\frac{11}{12}$;

extent of wings 32; wing from flexure $10\frac{10}{12}$; tail $5\frac{3}{4}$; bill along the back $1\frac{3}{4}$, along the edge of lower mandible $2\frac{1}{4}$; tarsus $\frac{10\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; middle toe $1\frac{1}{4}$, its claw $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$. Weight $4\frac{3}{4}$ oz.

Width of mouth 9 twelfths. Tongue 1 inch 3 twelfths long, very slender, tapering to a horny point, grooved above, emarginate and papillate at the base. Œsophagus 4 inches 4 twelfths long, its width along the neck 8 twelfths, within the thorax dilated as in the last species, its breadth 1 inch 1 twelfth; the proventricular belt 4 twelfths broad. Stomach very small, 10 twelfths long, 8 twelfths in breadth, of the same structure as in the last. Lobes of liver 1 inch 2 twelfths and 11 twelfths; gall-bladder oblong, 6 twelfths in length, 3 twelfths in breadth. Intestine 13 inches long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths wide at the commencement, $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths toward the rectum; cœca $2\frac{1}{4}$ twelfths long, $\frac{1}{2}$ twelfth wide, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the extremity; cloaca ovate, 7 twelfths in width. Trachea 3 inches long, from $2\frac{3}{4}$ twelfths to $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth, roundish; the rings 110, very feeble. Bronchi very wide, one with 26, the other with 24 half rings.

GENUS III.—LARUS, *Linn.* GULL.

Bill shorter than the head, nearly straight, moderately stout, compressed; upper mandible with its dorsal outline straight to the middle, then decurved, the ridge convex, the sides rapidly sloping, the edges sharp and direct, the tip rather obtuse; nasal groove rather long and narrow; nostrils sub-medial, longitudinal, linear-oblong, broader anteriorly; lower mandible with the angle long and pointed, the outline of its crura decurved anteriorly, that of the ridge slightly concave and ascending, the sides erect, the edge-line decurved toward the tip, which is narrow but obtuse. Head of moderate size, broadly ovate; neck of ordinary length; body compact. Feet rather long or of moderate length, rather stout; tibia bare at the lower part; tarsus moderately compressed, with numerous curved anterior scutella, and smaller behind; toes slender, of moderate length, scutellate; first very small, third a little longer than fourth. Claws small, slightly arched, compressed, rather

blunt. Plumage close, soft, blended, on the back and wings rather compact. Wings very long, pointed; first and second quills longest; secondaries broad, the inner more elongated. Tail of moderate length, generally even, rarely rounded or emarginate, of twelve feathers. In those which have the head white in summer, it is streaked with dusky in winter; and those which are hooded in summer, have the head white and slightly streaked in winter.

THE FORKED-TAILED GULL.

+ LARUS SABINI, *Sabine*.

PLATE CCCCXLI.—MALE.

On my return from Labrador, I had the pleasure of seeing this interesting little Gull flying over the harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia. It was in company with our Common American Gull. Although I have not observed it on our eastern shores or farther south on the coast, it is not improbable that it rambles there in winter along with other species which, like itself, breed far north. Its flight in some measure resembles that of the Common Tern, although it is more decided, and, consequently, more like that of the smaller species of its own genus. In the course of a voyage from Pictou in Nova Scotia to Hull in England, lately performed by my friend Mr. THOMAS MACCULLOCH, he saw great numbers of this species when more than a hundred miles off Newfoundland. They flew around the ship in company with an almost equal number of Ross' Gull.

Dr. RICHARDSON gives the following account of the Forked-tailed Gull, in the *Fauna Boreali-Americana*. "This interesting species of Gull was discovered by Captain EDWARD SABINE. It was first seen on the 25th of July at its breeding station on some low rocky islands lying off the west coast of Greenland, associated in considerable numbers with the Arctic Tern, the nests of both birds being intermingled. It is analogous to the Tern not only in its forked tail, and in its choice of a breeding place, but also in the boldness which it displays in the protection of its young. The parent birds flew with impetuosity towards persons approaching their nests, and when one was killed, its mate, though frequently fired at, continued on the wing close to the spot. They were observed to get their food on the sea-beach,

Sooty Tern.
Male

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon, F.R.S.E.L.S.

Lith. Printed & Col^d by J. T. Bowen, Philad^a

Audubon, John James. 1844. "The Noddy Tern, *Sterna stolida*, Linn. [Pl. 440]."
The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories 7, 123–127. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319552>.

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