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CASPIAN TERN (*STERNA CASPIA*) MOVEMENTS ALONG THE MOBILE-TENSAW RIVERS

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The Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) is cosmopolitan in its distribution. In North America it breeds from eastern Washington, east to the Great Lakes, James Bay and along the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland and south to Florida and Texas. It winters from central California south to Baja California and from North Carolina south along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts to eastern Mexico, northern Columbia and Venezuela (*AOU Checklist of North American Birds*, 1983). It is considered primarily a coastal migrant, less frequently using large rivers in the interior (*AOU Checklist*). In Alabama, Imhof (1976, *Alabama Birds*) considers it a common winter visitor and an uncommon migrant along the larger river valleys, especially in fall. In recent years it has bred in small numbers on Gailliard Island in Mobile Bay.

From 21-26 April 1992, Bill Bremser periodically watched a steady procession of Caspian Terns through a 30X spotting scope from the 10th floor of the River view Hotel in Mobile as they moved northward up the Mobile River. Observations were sporadic and took place at various times of the day. Birds were seen moving north during the morning, mid-day and late afternoon. None were seen flying south. On five different occasions, Duncan and/or I have observed a steady procession of Caspian Terns from Hurricane Landing, ten miles (16 kilometers) north of the mouth of the Tensaw River, in April and May from 1987 to 1991. Birds were always moving north, or upriver.

These observations indicate that the birds are common spring migrants in the Mobile delta areas. An estimate by Bremser of four terns per minute, or 2400 terns per day, indicates that the lower river systems of Alabama are being used as corridors for movement by these terns. It is not likely, given the constant direction of movement, that these terns were "locals" from the Mobile Bay colony. The magnitude of the numbers would preclude that possibility as well. It is probable that these birds were migrating from wintering areas to breeding grounds in the interior of the continent. Observers should note whether large numbers of these terns are moving up the Tombigbee and Alabama-Black Warrior river systems in April. – **William J. Bremser, Jr.**, 1124 Laguna Lane, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561 and **Robert A. Duncan**, 614 Fairpoint Dr., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561.