

I often saw adults fly up when a chick ran out from cover and approached them. As the chick approached, the adult usually flew up, called, and then landed to feed the chick. In these instances the chick seemed to stimulate the fly-up. Several times I saw a chick run past several adults, each one flying up in turn as the chick approached, until the chick finally came up to an adult that fed it. Thus the adults seemed to react as if the chick were their own while the chick went by and approached another adult, presumably its parent, to be fed.

PANICS

Sooty Terns exhibit two distinct types of disturbance flights, commonly called panics. Of these, dreads apparently include the flights Palmer (1941) calls dreads and panics for Common Terns while those termed alarms are similar in both species.

ALARMS.—When an intruder openly approaches the colony, the birds stand upright with the neck and head stretched vertically. As the intruder comes closer they fly, calling as they do so, and then circle and hover over the intruder until it leaves the vicinity of the scrape. Unlike many other terns, Sooties seldom actually strike an intruder, but rather hover near it or dive at it without striking it. I did see Sooties attack Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) and once a Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryula martinica*) that had broken a tern egg.

A loud, long alarm call, usually a downward inflected “kec aa” or “kerr aa” often precedes the alarms. Most alarms are quite local, involving relatively few birds in the colony. Occasionally though, they spread throughout the colony and virtually all of the terns fly. Alarms seem to start from an intrusion that is not sudden, but anticipated for a short time. The circling and calling by Sooties during rain are probably just a form of the alarm. Other disturbances are caused by less tangible factors such as a loud sound (e.g., sonic boom, boat whistle) or a sudden movement. These elicited a different response — the dread.

DREADS. — In dreads the terns suddenly become silent and fly rapidly from the colony to the water, darting and swooping as a unit silently down low over the water. At the end of the swoop, they rise up, start calling loudly, and gradually drift back to the colony. Thus if a bird is on the ground when the dread starts, it flies rapidly out over the water, and those birds that are already in the air suddenly swoop out over the water. This seems to be a high intensity form of panic.

One final, poorly defined alarm reaction is that in which virtually the entire colony flies up from the ground, either at once or, more often, in a gradually spreading group from one end of the island to the other. In the air the birds call loudly and drift out over the water and then gradually move back to the colony. This delayed alarm seems to start as an alarm in one part of the colony, and as those birds fly, they scare up birds near them and so on until the whole colony is in the air.

Lind (1963) suggests that in Sandwich Terns these disturbance flights