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coloured, 11 mm. Chin and throat dirty white with dark olive shaft streaks.

Body	Bright olive yellow mantle concolourous with back and upper tail coverts; breast pale greenish gray spotted dirty yellow; belly pale greyish yellow; undertail coverts pale yellow, the feathers with brown centres.
Wings	Primaries and secondaries dark brown margined with bright olive yellow; coverts similarly. 100 mm.
Tail	Middle pair of feathers dark brown, remainder strongly graduated with white distal halves tipped with dark brown. 60 mm.
Legs	Greenish slate; feet zygodactylous; thighs brown streaked with dirty white.

SABINE'S GULL *XEMA SABINI* (SABINE) OFF WEST AFRICA

C.H. Fry

In view of the greater attention to and interest in non-birds which may result from the subsequent article, it is relevant to note here a species which may be a regular and frequent migrant in the Eastern Atlantic, although it has escaped mention in Bannerman.

Recently there have been a number of important records of Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* in the Eastern Atlantic and off South Africa, which between them give the first picture of the wintering and migration of the species in the Atlantic. An observation of my own which I should like to record here was of an immature Sabine's Gull at 6° 19' N., 11° 17' W. (20 miles from Cape Mount Liberia) on 21st May 1962 and of an adult in breeding plumage at 21° 13' N., 17° 42' W (40 miles from Cape Blanc, Mauretania) on 24th May 1962.

Except for one bird on the Azores in May 1950 (Mayaud, 1961), the first record from the Eastern Atlantic South of latitude 40° N. was in 1957, at Table Bay, South Africa, in December. A Sabine's Gull was seen at Slang Bay, South Africa, in February 1958, and 4 recorded close offshore near Table Bay in March 1961. These records are further discussed by Zoutendyk (1965), who gives details of the many observations of small flocks (up to 30 and 50 birds) off South Africa in February 1963 and 1964 (with one in May 1964) and concludes that the species occurs far more abundantly along the West coast of Southern Africa than was hitherto realised.

Roux (1961) describes the heavy north-westerly passage of Sabine's Gulls through which he passed off Senegal, Rio de Oro and Morocco between 7th and 12th May 1961. Flocks totalling 63 birds were seen on 8-9th May, all flying North-West. These and other Atlantic records, and the world breeding, wintering and migratory distribution, are discussed by Mayaud. The hypothesis of Fisher & Lockley (1954) that some Sabine's Gulls winter in the Bay of Biscay is rejected, and Mayaud concludes that there is a wintering population off South-West Africa, migrating

round the bulge of West Africa for Greenland and Spitzbergen breeding grounds. Probably western as well as eastern Siberian populations winter in the Pacific, e.g. off Peru.

Hitherto unpublished records of the species in Spring movement off West Africa are those of Capt. Stam deposited in the files of the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society (pers. comm.), lending further evidence that there is a substantial northerly migration in Spring. The R.N.B.W.S. has no West African Sabine's Gull records prior to 1962, when Stam saw 'several' at $19^{\circ} 57' N.$, $17^{\circ} 31' W.$ on 17th April; two and six respectively on 18th and 19th April, and 'several' on each of the three subsequent days at $7^{\circ} 34' N.$ $13^{\circ} 53' W.$; $11^{\circ} 01' N.$, $17^{\circ} 20' W.$; and $19^{\circ} 54' N.$, $12^{\circ} 42' W.$ There were on records on a voyage between 10° and 30° North from 2nd to 20th June 1962. Stam adds (pers. comm.) one Spring 1961 record: one on 10th May at $14^{\circ} 58' N.$, $17^{\circ} 37' W.$

In Autumn, Stam saw 6 in the Monrovia roads on 6th September; one at $11^{\circ} 25' N.$, $7^{\circ} 19' W.$ on 5th October; three at $41^{\circ} 33' N.$, $10^{\circ} 04' W.$ on 12th October; and four at $14^{\circ} 13' N.$, $17^{\circ} 33' W.$ on 26th October 1962; thirteen about 15 miles West of Finisterre (Spain) on 28th August 1963 all flying in a northerly direction, plus four later that day.

It is remarkable that such a startling migration as is hinted at by these various observations should have escaped notice for so long. The R.N.B.W.S. has had very few observers in the relevant areas before Capt. Stam; however neither adult nor immature Sabine's Gulls are liable to be overlooked - my immature example was first spotted in a loose flock of 100 terns at 150 yards, and the paucity of former records probably reflects the small numbers and/or circumscribed distribution of the species wintering in the Atlantic. Since 1958 there has been an unusually large number of records from Britain also, indicating a possible change in population or status rather than an increased number of observers.

References: Fisher, J. & Lockley, R.M. (1954) *Sea Birds*. London

Mayaud, N. (1961) "Sur les migrations de la Mouette de Sabine Xema sabini (Sabine) et la question de ses zones d'hivernage. *Alauda* 29: 165-174

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Zoulundyk, P. (1965) The occurrence of Xema sabini off the coast of southern Africa. *Ostrich* 36: 15-16