

Least Tern

Least Tern *(Sterna antillarum)*

Instant ID

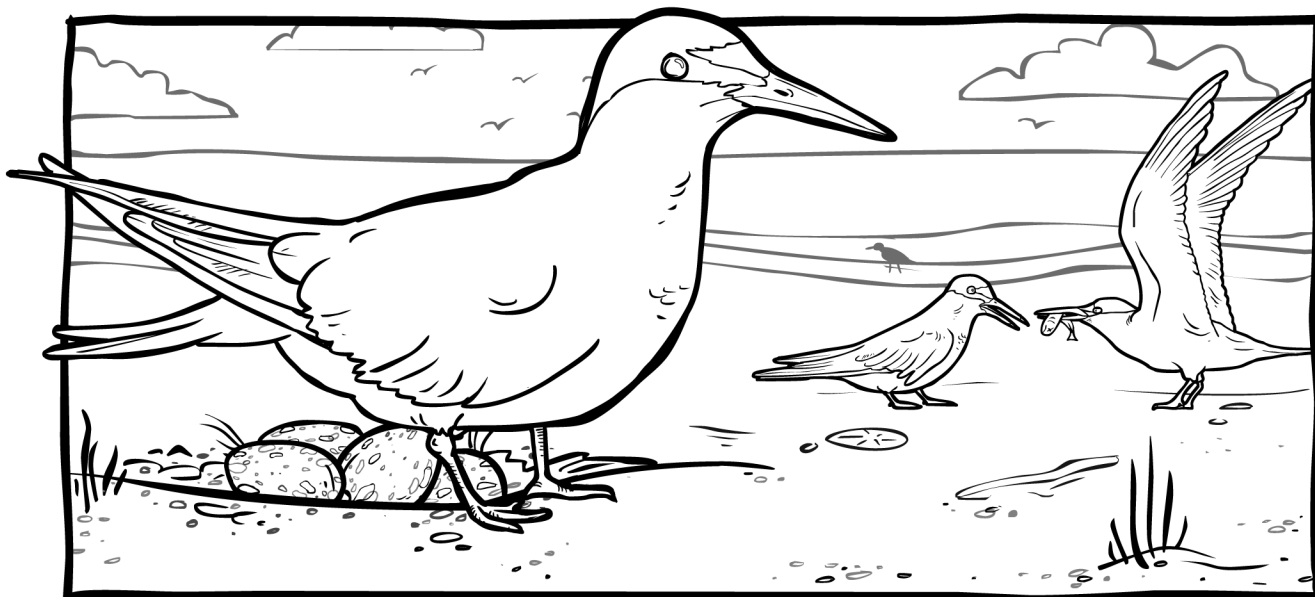
- A small gray, white and black shorebird
- 9 inches from head to tail, with a wingspan up to 20 inches
- Black stripe runs through the eyes with white forehead
- Coloration more distinct and bill yellow during breeding season

Native Niches

- Summer migrant to coastal and some inland waterways of Mexico and United States, including Florida
- Requires broad expanses of open beach for nesting
- Has adapted to nesting on flat roofs because of habitat loss

Favorite Foods

- Eats small fish caught in a dive after spotting them from the air



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Critter Characteristics

- Lays eggs in a shallow depression
- Eggs are camouflaged (colored to blend) with the sand
- Lays 1-4 eggs which are incubated by both parents for 3 weeks
- Pair bond with a courtship “dance” and food exchange

Population Protection

- Listed as a threatened species in Florida
- Development and human disturbance of nesting sites are the biggest threat to least tern populations
- If parents are frightened away, unshielded eggs easily overheat
- Avoid approaching or allowing pets to approach designated resting / nesting zones