

SPORTS & OUTDOORS

From the **S****O'MARA IN FOOTBALL CLASSIC**

Whaler linebacker John O'Mara will play in the 29th annual Shriners Football Classic at Bentley College in Waltham Friday night.

The Shriners Football Classic showcases the top senior players from across the state. According to coach Vito Capizzo, O'Mara is one of only seven Nantucket players ever to be selected to play in the prestigious game that benefits the Shriners Hospital for Children. To be considered, players must be nominated by their coaches and be supported by their league.

"John is a very coachable kid," Capizzo said. "He was our number one tackler last year, and has all the ability to be something special." O'Mara plans to attend Nichols College in the fall.

HOLDGATE TO CONTINUE LACROSSE AT MT. IDA COLLEGE

Josh Holdgate

After four years of varsity level lacrosse, Josh Holdgate will exchange his Whaler pads for those of the Mount Ida Mustangs of Newton, Mass., where he will be studying sports management. Holdgate hopes to help the Mustangs secure a fifth consecutive North Atlantic Conference Championship next spring. He feels that the Nantucket lacrosse program has shown him that hard work and dedication pay off.

— Sam Toole

GOMES TO CYCLE CROSS-COUNTRY

Walter Gomes, who made his first bike from a frame he found at the Nantucket dump, plans to bike from Anacortes, Wash. to Portland, Maine to celebrate his 80th birthday next year.

Gomes, who now lives in Sierra Vista, Ariz., after a career in the U.S. Army and with the Union Pacific Railroad, grew up on the island. He and his family left the island in the last days of the Depression. "I remember the day we left for the mainland," he told the *Sierra Vista Herald*. "December 7, 1941. Infamous."

According to the *Herald* story: "Gomes remembers hearing about Pearl Harbor while on the ferry from Nantucket. 'People were so worried. They thought our boat would get bombed. But my father knew how far away Hawaii was. And he told others not to worry.'"

SKATE SAFE SATURDAY

Skating demonstration by the region's top skateboarders will be held Saturday, June 23, from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the new skate park on Backus Lane.

Dillon Buss will lead the demonstration that will also feature Tim Burlingame, who rides for DC shoes, Zoo York skateboards and Baystate Wheels; Rob Cabral, who rides for I-Path shoes and Baystate Wheels; Jack Kelly, who rides for Emerica shoes.

All island skateboarders and parents are welcome. The event is sponsored by the Park and Recreation Commission, Alliance Against Substance Abuse and the Stop & Shop. Rain date is June 30. ■



Arctic Tern

BIRDS OF NANTUCKET

by Kenneth Turner Blackshaw

ARCTIC TERN – THE DAYLIGHT BIRD

This bird knows 24 hours of daylight in summer and then 24 more in its 'other' summer. One text says they live eight months each year in areas where the sun doesn't set at all. You'd think they would get sunburned! But then, they are mostly white, so most of that light is just reflected.

We're talking about *Sterna paradisaea*, translating to the 'paradise' tern. I wandered into an amazing series of facts researching this name given by Erik Pontoppidan, the Bishop of Bergen, Norway, in the early 18th century. The word 'paradise' is fascinating, first used in the Greek 'Septuagint' describing the Garden of Eden. The Septuagint title refers to the legend that it took 72 Jews 72 days to do the original translation for Ptolemy the II of Egypt. But of course I digress. The Bishop felt that so beautiful a creature must live in a home beyond the sky.

And for this seabird, this is not such a great stretch. They nest all around the world in the northern hemisphere, as far north as dry land can be found. In the late 1800s, the Nantucket area, specifically the island of Muskeget, was known as the southernmost nesting place in North America.

Let's discuss a bit about what this bird looks like. We have four very similar terns on Nantucket: the Common, Roseate, Arctic and Forster's. Birders know these as medium-sized terns, MSTs. Fishermen often call them 'mackerel' gulls since they tend to hover over schools of small fish. These terns are smaller than gulls, with long, slim wings, and swallow-like tails. They fly gracefully with deep wingbeats, almost never soaring as gulls do. In the spring they all have black caps and are white below and light grey above.

To separate them it's best to get the bill color. In spring Arctic Terns have blood-red bills, all the way to the tip. But getting a good enough view to discern that can be a trick. If you come upon a group of terns sitting on a sandbar, as is

often the case, look for ones that are sitting lower. Arctic Terns have shorter legs than the other MSTs. In flight, their wings are a more uniform grey. So at least in spring you have a hope of separating Arctic Terns from the others. In other seasons, that blood-red bill becomes black and you have to know which terns are likely to be where.

Actually Arctic Terns are considered to be pelagic when not nesting. I remember dragging my sea-sick self on a too-small boat out to the Gulf Stream 70 miles east of the Georgia coast one late August. There we found Arctic Terns resting on bits of flotsam in the warm green waters, the only way to get that species on your 'Georgia' bird list.

These terns were just starting their long migration that would culminate in the waters off the Antarctic continent, 11,000 miles from their northern summer homes. Their annual trip is conservatively estimated at 25,000 miles since they do a circular route, down the east coast of South America, and then back up the west coast of Africa before arriving in our waters in early May.

Up until 20 years ago, they could be found nesting on Nantucket, along our more isolated beaches. Edith Andrews remembers seeing a 12-year-old that she had banded in the mid-'70s when there was a colony of them at Great Point. Arctic Terns have great longevity considering their arduous annual trip, one having made it to its 34th birthday.

Longevity was a real problem around 1900 since these birds' marvelous tail feathers made them a target for gunners who would pluck them and pass them on to ladies' hat manufacturers.

Although they no longer nest here, they are common nesters as close as Machias Seal Island in the Gulf of Maine. Years ago I was fortunate enough to go there to see the wonderful colony of Atlantic Puffins that live there. Arctic Terns were the dominant species and I was stunned at how aggressively they defended their territory. Being used to working in tern colonies, I was holding a stick above my head so they would strike that instead of my noggin. But Arctic Terns use a more effective weapon. I realized this suddenly when I felt warm liquid running down inside my ear and had an immediate desire to head for safer territory.

Not only do these terns travel 25,000 miles a year, they are excellent bombardiers as well. Unlike the Bishop of Bergen I wasn't thinking of paradise. I bet he was smart enough to stay out of range! ■

George C. West creates illustrations for these articles. If you enjoy 'social' birding, join the Nantucket Bird Club at 8 a.m. Sundays in front of Nantucket High School for a two to three hour birding trip. Call 228-1693 for more information. To hear about rare birds, or to leave a bird report call the Massachusetts Audubon hot line at 1-781-259-8805. Ask Ken a question at: kenandcindy1@comcast.net.

SOCCER

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charging Westport team and particularly Medeiros, who, in the words of an impressed Coach Shelly Brannigan, "was the best individual player we have ever faced." She added that it was even more impressive as "Medeiros was so fast and agile on the field despite being the smallest player on the field." Crosby had high praise for the Westport coach as well. "She was a nice coach and the team was nice. It was a

clean game and it was too bad someone had to lose."

Nantucket had the defense to thank for the 3-2 win: Olivia Rand, Kyra White, Kylie Maguire, Sumner LeBaron-Brien, Hannah Pykosz and Kali Sherburne. Forwards Samantha Freed, Mya Kotalac and Jacq Raynor kept the pressure on most of the game. But, the outstanding individual play at mid-field of Jensen, Taylor Kopp and Alexa Crosby combined to contain "number 15" and cut down her shooting power and eke out the victory for Nantucket. ■