



charge. Of the five chief birds, the royal terns, Caspian terns, Cabot's terns, laughing gulls, and skimmers, there were that season about one thousand nests. This season, ten years later, there are about thirty-five thousand nests. The brown pelicans and Louisiana herons also show a marked increase. The least tern, which had been completely exterminated or driven away, has returned and is breeding in fair numbers.

"As we steamed away from the Pass Christian dock dawn was turning to daylight under the still brilliant crescent moon. Soon we saw the red disk of the sun rising behind the pine forest. We left Mississippi Sound, and then were on the Gulf itself. The Gulf was calm, and the still water teemed with life.

"Huge rays sprang out of the water and fell back with a resounding splash. Devil-fish, which made the rays look like dwarfs, swam slowly near the surface; some had their mouths wide open as they followed their prey. Once we saw the head of a turtle above water; it was a loggerhead turtle, and the head was as large as the head of a man; when I first saw it, above the still water, I had no idea what it was.

"By noon we were among the islands of the reservation. The birds breed most plentifully in the numberless smaller islands—some of considerable size—where there

is no water, and usually not a tree. Some of these islands are nothing but sand, with banks and ramparts of shells, while others are fringed with marsh-grass and covered with scrub mangrove. But the occasional fierce tropical storms not only change the channels and alter the shape of many of the islands, but may even break up some very big island.

#### Mosquitoes attack

"Toward evening of our first day the weather changed for the

worse; the fishers among the party were recalled, and just before nightfall we ran off, and after much groping in the dark we made a reasonably safe anchorage. By midnight the wind fell, dense swarms of mosquitoes came aboard, and, as our mosquito-nets were not well up (thanks partly to our own improvidence, and partly to the violence of the wind, for we were sleeping on deck because of the great heat), we lived in torment until morning.

"The westernmost island we visited was outside the national reservation, and that very morning it had been visited and plundered by a party of eggers. The eggs had been completely cleared from most of the island, gulls and terns had been shot, and the survivors were in a frantic state of excitement. It was a good object-lesson in the need of having reserves, and laws protecting wild life, and a sufficient number of efficient officers to enforce the laws and protect the reserves. Defenders of the short-sighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful and beautiful wild things sometimes seek to champion them by saying that 'the



*Theodore Roosevelt, M.L. Alexander, and warden William Sprinkle examine a Royal tern egg on Bird Island, Louisiana.*