

## THE TERN

The coast of Maine is a land of cool climate. The Labrador Current, which forces the Gulf Stream out across the Atlantic, eddies into the Bay of Maine bringing with it oceanic life from the north. A few subarctic birds have established their southernmost colonies on rocky outer islands off Penobscot and Frenchman's Bays. Among these are Razor-billed Auks, Murres, Atlantic Puffins, and Arctic Terns. At the entrance to Penobscot Bay, exposed to the full force of winter storms, lies a group of islands of which Matinicus, where a fisherman's settlement was established many generations ago, is the largest. Matinicus Rock, the site of a lighthouse and the last, lonely rampart of land, rises from the continental shelf five miles to seaward. On this pinnacle of split and shattered granite, above the reach of the surf, Puffins, Murres, and Arctic Terns come yearly to raise their young. Sharing the islet with them in nesting burrows they dig in the sparse, peaty soil, Leach's Petrels return to their young from ocean foraging only at night.

With the relaxation of military security following World War II, the guest of a very agreeable and hospitable Coast Guard crew, I spent a week on Matinicus Rock photographing birds. I went especially to photograph Puffins but because it was late in the season most of the young birds were already out on the water and I was unable to find any occupied nests. The Terns, however, still had downy young running about and the young Petrels were many weeks from fledging.