

23-92-4

Accepted

CFO-ORC FILE #

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD : : UNUSUAL RECORD !x !

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Arctic Tern : Sterna paradisaea
(Scientific name)

Date(s): 6/9/92

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: unk. Plumage: adult

Locality: Neenoshe Reservoir Elevation: 3850'

Nearest town: Eads County: Kiowa

Time(s) observed: early afternoon

Duration of observation: 15 minutes

Others who saw the bird with you (names and addresses): Keith Barker, Colorado Bird Observatory, Miguel A. Salas Paez, Forest Biologist, Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico.

Others who saw the bird independently: None?

Light conditions in relationship to bird: The sky was mostly cloudy, and we walked out to the lakeshore between deluges.

Optical equipment used: 10 x B&L Binoculars. 20 x Bushnell spotting scope.

If photographed, type of equipment and film: My lens was in shop being repaired.

Who else photographed the bird? None.

Describe the bird's behavior. The bird was sitting in a little bay between two Piping Plover colonies, and we saw it and a Common Tern roosting within a foot of each other. We stopped and scoped it from about 150' away. We edged closer, and may have gotten views in the scope from as close as 75 to 80 feet. After watching it for about 10 minutes through scopes, we continued down the beach, and I prepared the other observers for field marks to look for when it was in flight. We then flushed the bird. We watched it fly with the Common Tern for about 5 more minutes. It flew to north side of the lake.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide

23-92-4

descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually saw in the field. A medium sized tern, about 15 inches long from bill to tip of tail. It was about the same size as the Common Tern it was with, but proportioned differently, and immediately piqued our interest. I drew field sketches at time of observation, which I've copied and included.

Points of identification

1. Bill was a very dark red, lacking a dark or dusky tip. The bill was both shorter and thinner than the bill of a Common Tern, roosting within one foot of the Arctic Tern. The bill of the Common Tern was a brighter red color, more toward scarlet, and with a dark tip.
2. Under identical roosting conditions, the Arctic Tern's red legs were only half as long as the legs of the Common Tern.
3. At rest, the tail extended quite far behind the wing tips, while on the Common Tern, the wing tips and tail extended to the same point.
4. The head was rounder and smaller-looking than in the Common Tern (which had a flat-headed look with a peak at the back). The black cap on the Arctic Tern was more extensive, and extended lower on the face.
5. The undersides, extending from the throat to the vent were a pearly gray, the same color as the back and wings. The only white visible on the standing bird was an oval below the eyes on the face. Common Terns are often pale gray on the lower belly, but not on the upper breast or throat.
6. In flight (see drawing), the underside of the wing showed a translucent triangle. The margins of the primaries were very thin but sharply tipped with black, easily visible. The upper wings were uniformly colored, and lacked the dark wedge usually seen in Common Terns on the middle primaries. The head did not look large in flight, and the tail looked very long. The flight was buoyant and snappy.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): Silent.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird: Lakeshore and open water of a huge prairie lake.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species? Short red legs eliminates Forster's Tern, as does all dark red bill. Roseate Tern never has an all red bill. Common by far the most similar, eliminated by bill proportions, leg length, body shape and plumage, see text, above.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I've seen one previous Arctic Tern, dozens of Common Terns in Colorado, and perhaps thousands of Forster's Terns.

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc, consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

23-92-4

b) after observation: Pelagic Birds of Monterey Bay (Stallcup),
Advanced Birding (Kaufman), NGS. Peterson, several photographic
guides.

This report was written from reports made during (x), after
observation (x), from memory ().

Date and time report was written: 2/21/93

Reporting observer: Duane L. Nelson

Signature: *Duane Nelson*

Address: 1619 Ford St., Golden, CO 80401

All reports will be maintained with the Curator of Zoology,
Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO 80205.

23-92-4

Arctic Tern - *Sterna paradisica*

6/9/92 - with common tern.

Very dark red bill with no dark tip thinner + shorter than COTE

(Red)

legs 1/2 as long - it sat

1/2" above ground

Color GRAY Above + Below

Breast as dark as back, and gray

to throat - Only white on

region between crop + jaw-face.

underwing - whitish

triangle, very clear

use word - translucent

Translucent area

trailing edge of wing very

thin but sharply defined

black trailing margin

to tips of 1st

beak rounded,

maxilla much more

extensive than on

COTE, which has

wings + tail COTE = length



Flight - lighter, more buoyant than
COTE. Lim on at same time
head torso small tail very long
No hint of dark wing or body
sear on COTE which helped
completely displacement in flight.

Miguel A. Saks Paez

CIFAP

Apdo. Festival #128

Uruapan, Mich. 60000

Mexico