

✓ rec'd 11/98

SPECIES: LEAST TERN (*Sterna antillarum*)

ACCEPTED (7-0)

DATE: July 8, 1998

TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION:

07:05-07:15

12:45-13:15

LOCATION/COUNTY: Chatfield Reservoir; Douglas County

HABITAT: In flight over a medium sized, man-made reservoir and on a sandbar on this same reservoir

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

J.B. Hayes; 1517 West Briarwood Avenue, Littleton, CO 80120

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT I USED: Zeiss 10x40 binoculars
B&L Elite 77mm spotting scope

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

AM SKY: Partly Cloudy

WIND: South 5-10mph

TEMP: 62F

PM SKY: Partly Cloudy

WIND: North 10mph

TEMP: 80F

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION:

Variable: AM the bird was to the east of me (backlit) and north of me.
PM the bird was at times north of me and west of me.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: Varied; 40 - 150 yards

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 (one)

SEX: Unknown

PLUMAGE: First summer

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR:

J.B. Hayes first found this tern the previous afternoon flying around the south marina sand spit. On the 8th I found this small tern in the morning flying "daintily" over the water east of the marina sand spit. The bird flew with very rapid wingbeats and did several sharp turns and various aerial maneuvers. This was repeated in the early afternoon. In the afternoon the bird dived many times (I never saw anything in its bill though) and after about every 10-20 dives the bird would fly over to the marina sandspit, land and rest. This "rest" period would last for anywhere from a few seconds to about 7 minutes. Also on the sandspit were 12 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and 5 California Gulls (*Larus Californicus*). Compared to the

gulls this tern was ABSOLUTELY tiny!! The gulls left the tern alone but if a gull walked by to close the tern would quickly "run" a short distance to get a safe distance away.

HEAD & NECK:

Head and crown white, with a very dark gray eye "mask" starting in front of the eyes and continued straight back, encompassing the eyes and around the head, meeting at the nape. The black extended downward to a point on mid-nape (see sketches #1 & #2); The lower portion of the mask on the nape and neck were black. A black eye "spot" behind the eye faintly stood-out black against the dark gray mask.

EYES & LORES:

Lores and forehead white with no dark flecking. Eyes black.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES:

Both mandibles longish, slender and straight (culmen and gonys); color black; pale base on the lower mandible.

LEGS & FEET:

Legs grayish-red; feet color not noticed.

UPPERPARTS:

Light gray back (lighter than the mantles of nearby Ring-billed Gulls. On the standing bird the dark gray (almost black) carpal bar was very prominent. This carpal bar extended forward and around the "shoulders" and back under the wing (see sketch #3).

UNDERPARTS:

White throat, chest, breast, belly and flanks.

RETRICES:

Light gray (same as back color); outer retrices elongated creating a forked tail.

WINGS:

Extended beyond the tail on the standing bird.

UPPERWINGS:

Primaries were black on standing bird. Black outer primaries seen in flight creating a dark leading edge to the wing.

Secondaries were the same light gray as the back.

UNDERWINGS:

Not particularly noticed.

VOCALIZATION:

None heard.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) - Much larger than Chatfield tern. Compared to the size of the bird the is bill shorter (not as long, straight and pointed). Lacks a carpal bar.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) - Much larger than Chatfield tern. Compared to the size of the bird the is bill shorter (not as long, straight and pointed). Carpal bar never as extensive as on the Chatfield tern.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) immature - "Mask" is the wrong shape (extending over much of the head instead of around the crown). Usually shows a partial collar. Back color is brownish (juveniles) not pale gray.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

Least Tern - Have seen several in southeast Colorado mostly adults in breeding plumage.

Forster's Tern - Have seen a few hundred in all plumages in Colorado, California, and Florida.

Common Tern - Have seen approximately 40 in Colorado in virtually all plumages.

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

"Terns of Europe and North America", Klaus Olsen and Hans Larsson, Copyright 1995 used to determine this tern's age.

NAME:

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SIGNATURE:**DATE:**

July 8, 1998

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Chatfield SRA

