

## Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

(This is a two-page report. Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.)

**Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!**

CFO-RC FILE X:

## RESULTS:

Species:(Common Name): <b>Arctic Tern</b>		(Scientific Name) <b>Sterna paradisaea</b>
Date(s) of occurrence: <b>September 10-11, 2002</b>		
Number of birds seen: <b>One</b>	Sex: <b>Unknown</b>	Plumage: <b>Juvenal</b>
Exact Location: <b>Standley Lake</b>		
County: <b>Jefferson</b>	Nearest town: <b>Westminster</b>	Elevation: <b>Roughly 5850 msl</b>
Length of observation: <b>Approximately 10 minutes</b>	Time(s) of observation: <b>5:50 – 6:05 PM MDST</b>	
Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: <b>Tony Leukering, Nancy Gobris</b>		
Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): <b>None known</b>		
Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: <b>Good, with mostly cloudy conditions</b>		
Optical equipment used: <b>7x42 Zeis Bins, Leica 20x60 Spotting Scope</b>		
Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): <b>Closest distance was perhaps 80 yards</b>		
Was bird(s) photographed? <b>Yes (video)</b>	If so, have you submitted photos? <b>No, distance of bird made video identification impossible.</b>	
Who took the photographs? <b>Myself</b>		
Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: <b>Open water reservoir</b>		
Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): <b>Flying and foraging by diving in water</b>		
<p>Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes):</p> <p><b>In the early evening, Tony Leukering, Nanci Gobris, and I observed a juvenal Arctic Tern at Standley Lake, Jefferson County. Though specific confirmation was not made in the field, all critical field traits of the subject bird were observed. Later in the evening, following review of Terns of Europe and North America by Olsen and Larsson (1995), it was confirmed that the bird we observed was indeed an Arctic Tern. While in the field, we had contemplated this species, but we were cautious and could not remember all salient points of juvenile/basic-plumaged Arctic Tern identification.</b></p> <p><b>It was fortunate that we were also able to observe five species of tern on that evening at Standley Lake. Particularly of interest were careful observations of both Forster's and Common Terns, which offered a comparison with the subject bird, and caused us to realize that the subject bird was indeed different.</b></p> <p><b>The following were field marks noted during the observation. The bird was a Sterna with long, pointed wings, grayish-white overall color, blackish helmet, slim, pointed bill, and forked tail. The flight style of the subject bird was very choppy or floppy, quite reminiscent of that of a Long-tailed Jaeger. This flight style was distinctly different from that of Common and Forster's Terns present on site, which had a more direct-patterned flight. The short bill appeared all black. The head contained a black helmet across the crown, eye, and auriculars. The forehead appeared white, along with the short neck and throat. The entire undersides were white. From above, the wings were very whitish, except for a diffuse dark gray carpal bar and a dark gray/light black, narrow trailing edge to the primaries. From below, the wings also appeared wholly white, save for the dark trailing edge to the primaries, which appeared darker on the underside than from above. We paid special attention to the secondaries and at no point were we able to discern any dark trailing edge to the secondaries. Quite evident was the length of the tail. While observed in flight, the tail length compared to the body was also reminiscent of that of a Long-tailed Jaeger, though obviously not as exaggerated. The outer rectrices were considerably longer than inner and created a deeply forked tail. These outer rectrices appeared as streamers to that of the inners.</b></p>		
Describe bird's call or song: <b>None heard</b>		



Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: *Common Tern, though having a black hood in juvenal plumage, has a darker carpal bar. That species typically has a dark secondary bar as well, which was not discerned on the subject bird. Forster's Tern would not have the dark helmet, but rather a black mask in juvenal plumage. Forster's Terns also generally have darker wingtips and usually have a noticeable secondary bar.*

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? *Have observed hundreds of others in Alaska and in Europe*

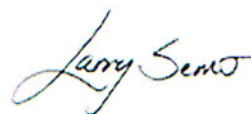
List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): *None*

This report is from notes made during \_\_\_\_\_ or after **XX** *from notes written the evening of the observation* or later from memory

Date of written report: **12/14/02**

Reporting observer: **Larry Semo**

Signature:



Reporting Observer's Address: **9054 Dover Street**

City: **Westminster**

State: **Colorado**

Zip: **80021**

Send report to:  
Colorado Birds Record Committee  
c/o Tony Leukering  
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ UNUSUAL RECORD X**Species:** Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**Date:** 10 September 2002**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Juvenal**Locality:** Standley Lake**Elevation:** ~5850'**Nearest town:** Westminster**County:** Jefferson**Time observed:** mid-afternoon**Duration of observation:** ~8 minutes

**Description:** While looking at waterbirds on Standley Lake, Larry Semo, Nancy Gobris, and I noted a juvenal *Sterna* tern that we took for a Common Tern. We did not pay much attention to it immediately after we "identified" it, as we were looking for other things. However, I kept running across it while scoping the lake and, eventually, I studied it carefully. I noted all the features I could and asked Larry to look at it carefully, as various features of the plumage did not seem right for Common Tern (it was really pale and its carpal bar was not as wide or dark as typical). We did not solve it at Standley Lake, but I took careful mental notes (I forgot my field notebook once again!) and intended to look up juvenal-plumaged Arctic Tern in my reference books when I returned home. This is a plumage with which I was wholly unfamiliar, but I suspected that the bird was probably referable to that species rather than Common Tern. Upon researching the plumage at home in Olsen and Larsson (1995) and Sibley (2000) I was convinced that the bird was, indeed, a juvenile Arctic Tern! Shortly after I came to this conclusion, Larry called me from his house to tell me that he had researched the plumage and was convinced that the bird was an Arctic.

The bird was an obvious medium-sized *Sterna* tern (gray upperparts, white underparts, some black on the head, long, narrow wings) that was quite pale gray above and in juvenal plumage (short outer rectrices on a white tail with dark corners). The bill was short and black; I did not see the legs. The forehead was white, as was the loreal region, but the rest of the upper half of the head was black in the form of a 'half-hood' very similar to that of Common Tern (though I did not see it with any Common Terns). The upperside of the wing had a vague darker carpal bar, but it was certainly not black and was not all that easy to see – unlike those typically found on Common Terns of the same age. I could not tell if the secondaries were gray or white, but they were very pale and completely lacked the dark secondary bar typical of Common Tern. The outer primaries were very pale and had thin, dark tips. Thus, the outer half of the wing was mostly paler than the inner half of the wing – the opposite situation exists in juvenile Common Terns. The tail was mostly white, but the corners were darker, presumably formed by dark tips to the outer 2-3 pairs of rectrices. The underparts were completely bright white.

Similar species eliminated: Juvenile Forster's Tern (the most common species of tern in CO) exhibit a distinct black mask with, in some individuals, some dark on the rear part of the crown, but without the obvious half-hood that Arctic and Common terns show. Young Forster's also show a dark gray secondary bar and darker wingtips than exhibited by the bird in question. Finally, the tail on young-of-the-year Forster's Terns has dark tips to virtually all of the rectrices forming a very different tail pattern. Juvenal-plumaged Common Tern is really the only strong ID contender, but that plumage is different in many respects, as discussed above.



Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): No vocalizations heard.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen 1000s of young Common Terns and Forster's Terns, but had not previously seen this plumage in Arctic Tern. Additionally, I had seen <50 Arctic Tern prior to this sighting.

Light conditions: sky was mostly cloudy with the sun to my left and in front

Optical equipment used: Leica 32x

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest approach of ~90 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Larry Semo and Nancy Gobris

Other observers who saw the bird independently: someone reported it the next day (Larry?)

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph

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

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation:

Olsen, K.M. and H. Larsson. 1995. Terns of Europe and North America. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Sibley, D.A. 2000. The Sibley Guide to Birds. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting  
CO 80603

Lane, Brighton,

Date report was written: 17 January 2004 from notes written that evening but before researching in references