

RARE SPECIES DOCUMENTATION

Records of Vermont Birds

The following form has been prepared to encourage full documentation, when requested, of rare or unseasonal birds in the state of Vermont. These reports are put into a permanent file and should be as detailed as possible. New reports are reviewed annually by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, which evaluates records for their acceptability to future researchers and for inclusion in the state bird list.

Please print or type

SPECIES: Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*)

NUMBER OBSERVED: 1

OBSERVERS: Eddy Edwards
Theodore Murin
Richard Lavallee
Craig Provost

OBSERVER MAKING REPORT: Craig Provost
P.O. Box 1241
Stowe, VT 05672

LOCATION: Dead Creek Outlet, Highgate, VT

DATE: 9/22/2016

TIME AND LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: First observed around 8:45 am perched on mudflat amongst large group of gulls. After ten minutes, bird took flight and headed west past the observers and continued until out of sight.

DISTANCES FROM BIRD: Maximum 100 feet; Minimum 60-75 feet (when perched on the mudflat until it took flight); In flight it passed by the observers roughly 100 feet away to our south and continued west.

WEATHER: Partly to mostly cloudy; winds calm.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: Various binoculars and scopes used by the observers.

Photographs attached were taken with a Nikon D7100, with a 55-300mm zoom lens (Provost).

OBSERVERS' PREVIOUS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THIS SPECIES OR SIMILAR FORMS: Second encounter with this species in Vermont (Provost). Numerous times along the Atlantic coast and out west. Other observers have also encountered this species previously in Vermont and elsewhere.

OTHER DOCUMENTATION: Photographs attached to this report (Provost). Those shown in ebird checklist (Edwards). <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S31707408>

HABITAT: Mudflat along lakeshore.

BIRD'S BEHAVIOR: Resting and preening on mudflat. Moved a couple times as gulls walked by. Took flight on its own as the numerous gulls remained on the mudflat. Flew past us and continued west/northwest until out of sight.

VOCALIZATION: None heard

DESCRIPTION:

Relative size and shape: Clearly smaller than the numerous Ring-Billed Gulls. Similar in size although much lower posture, shorter necked, and more streamlined in build than nearby Bonaparte's Gulls also roosting on the mudflat.

Head: White head and slight amount of light gray visible on nape with black patch around and behind eye curling down to the auricular. Eye black.

Feet and Bill: Feet reddish orange darkened by sun angle while bird was perched on the mudflat. Better view of feet when bird was in flight. Bill black and heavier than other similar sized terns (Common, Arctic, Roseate).

Upper back: Light gray.

Lower back and rump: White; viewed in flight.

Wings: Light gray on back extending onto upper wings. Slightly darker gray on upper wing primary tips; darker (blackish) primary tips on underwing.

Breast, belly, flanks, undertail coverts: All white.

Tail: Did not observe any tail extension while bird was at rest on the mudflat. In flight, observed slightly longer outer tail feathers relative to the inner tail. (see photos in ebird checklist; link in OTHER DOCUMENTATION above).

IMPORTANT: WHAT SIMILAR SPECIES WERE ELIMINATED WHEN MAKING THIS IDENTIFICATION AND HOW WAS THIS BIRD DIFFERENT?

Primary field mark separating this species from similar species is the black eye/auricular mask with a light nape (non-breeding plumage). Lack of any dark marking on carpal bar also rules out the more likely Common Tern in this location, and Arctic Tern.

COMMENTS: Believe this is a juvenile bird.

Notes were not taken during, nor after the observation. At the time, after we viewed and identified the bird through binoculars and scopes, photographs were taken.

Craig S. Provost

P.O. Box 1241 Stowe, VT 05672

DATE: 9/18/2016



