

WEST VIRGINIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Number: WVBRC 2023-8 Species: Arctic Tern – Taylor Co

Vote (select only one) For State List Hypothetical List Against Exotic

Reasons voting FOR the record: *(attach more pages if necessary)*

- CM1) I must admit I had difficulty with this one. I have no experience with Arctic Tern in non-breeding plumage, and little experience with Common Tern in that plumage. (Common Tern is the species most likely to be confused with Arctic Tern.) Arctic Tern and Common Tern are very similar in non-breeding plumage, and without a side-by-side comparison it can be very difficult to tell the two apart. I had to do some research which involved descriptions and photographs in order to make a judgment in this case. Based on that research, I believe the photographs and description provided in this report do point to Arctic Tern, specifically the upper- and under-wing patterns, the comparatively paler carpal bar on this bird, and the seemingly short legs.
- CM2) This is an interesting small tern with outstanding photographic evidence provided by the submitter of this record. The photographic evidence clearly shows a tern, which is not an adult in breeding plumage, but most likely a subadult 1st year bird. In June, adult terns should be in full breeding plumage with a complete black cap, which this bird does not show, so it isn't an adult. It can be separated from Common Tern by the extensive lack of a dark carpal bar, amount of dark on the wings and bill length, and the tail fork for this age bird. Forster's Tern would also show dark primary feathers in the wings and less black than observed on the head of the tern shown in the record. Roseate Tern is mainly a coastal bird and, in this plumage, would have more gray/black on wing tip primaries. I compared bill length and exposed leg length with photos of Arctic Terns I have taken in Alaska, and they are comparable. Overall, I believe that this is an Arctic Tern.
- CM3) I am in support of this report. Images support this as an arctic tern.
- CM4) An excellent writeup and photos! The submitter also consulted with others with tern experience. It appears to be a 1st summer bird. Between 1st summer Common, Arctic, and Forster's Tern only Arctic has its primaries darker at the tips. The primaries also exhibit a translucence appearance shown in the flight photos. Common would be darker overall and begin to show its dark primary "wedge" pattern. Forster's has a medium gray back and paler primaries. There is a hint of a carpal bar but not as dark as one would expect in 1st summer Common Tern. Forster's does have a carpal bar in any plumage. The timing of the report is excellent. There are many late June reports of Arctic Tern in eBird.
- CM5) Clear photo evidence, accurate description. Other terns were considered by the observer, but were ruled out by the characteristics displayed by this bird in structure, plumage, and bill.
- CM6) Observer provides no field notes drawing detailed contrast with similar species, nor do they detail any prior experience with the species. Observer does provide multiple photographs which, vs. e.g. Common Tern, reveal some potentially distinguishing characteristics such as slender profile, straight and gracile bill, indistinct carpal bar, short-appearing legs (noting that measurements in the hand are required to confirm), white rump, translucent-appearing primaries. Wing vs tail projection is difficult to discern, and in any case is variable in 2nd year birds, which this likely would be.
- CM7) The following bullets derived from my listed sources are the primary reasons for voting to accept this as a record. These sources served as my primary references and were used in verifying the submitter's remarks and photos.
- sharply defined black trailing edge to the under-primaries.
 - upper primaries are paler gray, with a darker trailing edge (tips) -white underwings
 - attractive grey, black, and white bird, whereas juvenile Commons somehow come across as less smart

-a diffuse and much less prominent carpal bar

-median and greater coverts and secondaries appear largely white -date when observation was made

Sources used:

<https://www.birdguides.com/articles/identification/leucosticte-ile-common-and-arctic-terns/#:~:text=Shape%20and%20flight,a%20slightly%20quicker%20flight%20action>

The Sibley Guide to Birds - First Edition The Sibley Guide to Birds - Second Edition