

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1 adult, apparently definitive alternate plumage
3. Parish: Plaquemines Parish
Specific Locality: ca. 28-30 mi. SW of South Pass, in blue water in Gulf of Mexico
4. Date(s) when observed: 23 September 2017

5. Time(s) of day when observed: ca. 3:05-3:11

6. Reporting observer and address: Paul Conover, Lafayette LA

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): ID'ed with David Muth initially; many others subsequently; pelagic trip

8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Good sunlight, good angle

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Zeiss 10s and Nikon D3300 with 200 mm lens

11. Distance to bird(s): probably several hundred yards when first observed through binos; eventually within about 40 yards, I'd think.

12. Duration of observation: Total time about 6-7 minutes

13. Habitat: Blue water

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): MaryBeth Lima spotted a frigatebird in distance as we cruised. Muth suggested that we steer toward it in case it was above a feeding flock. We noticed several other frigates, then I noticed about 5 terns of at least 2 size classes feeding below it. Muth also spotted these, and as we neared, the birds drifted in our direction. I was expecting Bridled/Black, so I was surprised to see white flashes from the odd bird out in a flock of what by then were clearly Bridled Terns. Looking through binos, I saw a thick dark trailing edge and no dark "wedge" on the primaries, and started trying for photos, and urging others to concentrate on this bird, and photograph it.

Flight style consisted of light hovering 20-30 ft high over a small area for perhaps 10 seconds duration (while 2 associated Bridled Terns patrolled the area at a constant, lower altitude), dipping down toward surface, then drifting to nearby area and repeating. Eventually looped widely around the area and flew out of sight.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

A Common/Arctic type tern in apparently full breeding plumage with solidly dark cap extending to bill base.



Underparts gray except for thin whitish chin/throat stripe extending along lower edge of black cap, and at rear end of bird from the trailing edge of the wing through the undertail coverts and tail (with the exception of gray extending from belly onto vent area).



Underwing lining color difficult to assess; either white or an extension of the gray of the underparts. Flight feathers below without obvious sign of molt line, translucent with the exception of thin but dark and distinct trailing edge on all but innermost primaries. Innermost few primaries slightly contrasting with outer primaries, perhaps newer (terns are said to molt inner primaries independently of any molt cycles).





Upperparts medium silvery gray on mantle from level of leading edge to trailing edge of wing and onto upperwings; upperwings fairly uniform with wide white trailing edge to secondaries, no sign of molt. Slightly darker markings on primary coverts and perhaps lesser coverts in some photos. Dark trailing edge to upperwings similar to that of underwings.





Rump white, forked tail white with dark outer edges to pointed outer rect(s).





Bill in some photos appears dark, but in others appears dull reddish with dark tip, which appears to be the correct interpretation.

Eye dark, legs tucked during flight.

16. Voice: not heard

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Gray underparts with narrow white chin stripe, plain upperwings without signs of obvious molt such as dark wedge between old and new primaries, white rump contrasting with gray mantle, translucent primaries when seen against light from below, thin, dark, distinct trailing edge to primaries on upper and underwing eliminate Common Tern, the most similar species. Most of the above, plus dark markings on outer edge of the outer rectrices eliminate Forster's.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): I began snapping as soon as I suspected Arctic and snapped >100 photos, many adequate for ID. Attached.

19. Previous experience with this species: Some in Maritime Provinces on breeding grounds, one in Louisiana.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation:

b. after observation:

21. This description is written from:

<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	study of images

22. Are you positive of your identification? Yes.

23. Date: 9/27/2017