

Peterjohn

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Forster's Tern How many? 1

Location? Caralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., Iowa

Type of habitat? foraging over the open waters of the reservoir

When? date(s): Oct. 21, 1983 time: ~9:00 Am to for 2-3 minutes, intermittently

Who? your name and address: Bruce Peterjohn, 105-KE, Ticonderoga Dr., Westerville, OH

others with you: Tom Kent, Carl Bendorf, Tom Staudt, Rick Hollis

others before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The tern was fairly small, approximately the size of Barnard's Gulls that were in the area (no direct size comparison was possible). Its flight pattern consisted of relatively slow & shallow wing beats. The head was mostly white with a narrow black patch on the side of the face through the eye (the patch did not appear to extend onto the back of the head but this field mark is difficult to determine in flight). The underparts were uniformly white. The upperparts were generally gray except for the outer 4-5 primaries which were blackish. The tail appeared white & was slightly forked (tail pattern could not be seen in detail at that distance). The bill was black & fairly stout for a small tern.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Tern was eliminated by flight pattern (more rapid & deeper wing beats) & apparent head pattern (Common Terns have more extensive black on the head).

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? not to my knowledge

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
overcast with light rain - lighting conditions were not a factor in this sighting.  
distance - 100-300 yards, estimated  
7x42 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I regularly observe hundreds of Forster's & Common Terns each year in Ohio

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? 12 hours this form completed? 12 hours

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