

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Least Tern How many? oneLocation? 18th Ave. and East Main Street, Marshalltown, Marshall County, Iowa..Type of habitat? Partially flooded bean field with exposed mud flats.When? date(s): 08-19-93 time: 16:30 to 17:30Who? your name and address: Mike Stegmann 1165 260th Street, Garwin, Iowa 50632others with you: Garry Brandenburg - Director Marshall County Conservation Bd.others before or after you: None that I am aware of.

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 bird was discovered while viewing five American Avocets. The Avocets were in a sleeping position when further scanning of the immediate area revealed a smaller bird which was recognised as a tern by shape. This included a long sharp pointed bill, short neck, and long pointed wings and tail. Upon closer examination the bird had a distinct yellow bill and white forehead with a black crown, upper half of the head and nape. The lower half of the head, throat and breast were white. The back and sides were a very light gray. The bird was in a resting position during the entire observation time so the wings and tail were not visible in an open position and the feet were submerged in one half inch or less of water. The size was noticeably smaller than other more common terns I have seen in the past and was estimated one quarter to one third the body size of the Avocets it was seen with. The bird was an adult in summer plumage and other than resting with the flock of Avocets no additional behavior was recorded. When a return viewing trip was made one hour after the initial sighting the tern was absent but the Avocets remained.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Distinguished from Common and Foresters terns by size, bill color, and the presents of a white forehead.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Skies were clear and sunny. Distance was estimated at one hundred yards.

The bird was viewed through Tasco 7x35x50 zoom binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

This is a first sighting of this species for me but am familiar with the more

References and persons consulted before writing description: common Iowa terns.

Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds.

How long before field notes made? Immedeatly this form completed? Eight days

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240