

First Illinois Record of the Arctic Tern

by H. David Bohlen



Dennis Oehmke photographed the Arctic Tern on 29 June 1992 in Sangamon County. The sighting represents the first state record.

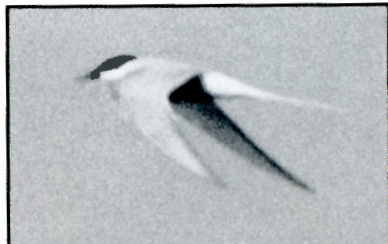
Among the few unconfirmed records of the Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) for Illinois, is an immature I observed at the Cinder Flats at the north end of Lake Springfield (Sangamon Co.) on 3 October 1986. So it was with pleasure that I found another one, an adult, in the same place on 28 June 1992 and had it confirmed by photos.

The medium-sized tern had an all-red bill that was quite thick at the base

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and tapered to a droop at the end. The head was rounded when compared to a nearby Forster's Tern, and the black cap included the eyes and nape. The upper part of the cheek was whitish, with gray on the lower cheek. The gray, which varied considerably depending on lighting, extended to the throat, breast, and belly and blended into the white undertail coverts. The upper parts were the same gray as the underparts, except for two white crescents on the tertials and a white rump. The tail extended one inch or more beyond the wingtips at rest. I also noted a blackish outer edge on the outer tail feathers. The tarsi were short and reddish. In flight the outer underwing was translucent with a well defined thin dark stripe along the trailing edge.

This tern stayed until 1 July 1992 and was viewed by many birders and photographed by Dennis Oehmke and



Joe B. Milosevich captured this Arctic Tern in flight on 1 July 1992 at Cinder Flats, Lake Springfield in Sangamon County. Note the narrow dark gray trailing edge to the upper side of primaries.

Joe Milosevich (see photographs). The tern sat on the flats most of the time although occasionally it flew out to the lake to feed. It gave a rasping note while chasing a Green-backed Heron.

Another adult Arctic Tern was reported at Michigan City, Indiana in mid-July. Both of these birds may have been in the Midwest because of the nesting failure due to cold weather that occurred in the Arctic in the summer of 1992 (*Amer. Birds* 46:5, p. 1141).

- Illinois State Museum, 1920 S. 10 1/2 St., Springfield, IL 62706. ♪

Editor's note: If accepted by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC), this would be the first confirmed state record of this species which many observers believe is long overdue.