

Gull. Instead I found a small gull with a yellow bill and black legs. I immediately recognized it as an immature Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) going into second year plumage. The bird had a black spot behind the eye and still had the black median (secondary coverts) of an immature, but did not have the black half collar.

This was my first spring sighting of a Black-legged Kittiwake. I had previously seen them in October and November and as late as January. I observed and photographed this Black-legged Kittiwake both at rest and in flight, for about 45 minutes, sometimes as close as 30 feet.

The significance of the sighting was the extremely late date. The same bird was seen at the same location by Andy Sigler and Robert Hughes 8 May 1993 during the Lake County Spring Bird Count. Hughes also observed what was probably the same individual 28 May 1993 at Chicago's Montrose Beach.

Previous recorded late spring sightings were 8 April, (Bohlen 1989, *The Birds of Illinois*), and 5 May (Mlodinow 1984, *Chicago Area Birds*). The only other midwestern June or July records mentioned in the literature were an 11 June 1982 record from northern Minnesota listed by Janssen (1987, *Birds in Minnesota*) and a 30 July 1977 record from near South Manitou Island, Michigan (Leelanau Co.) listed by Payne (1983, *A Distributional Checklist of the Birds of Michigan*).

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Illinois' Second Arctic Tern

I had decided to visit Brandon Road Lock and Dam along the Des Plaines River between Joliet and Rockdale, Will County 27 May 1993 for two reasons. First, I had not checked this hotspot since the Spring Bird Count of 8 May 1993. Secondly, and more importantly, I had promised my 5-year-old daughter, Julie, that we would go somewhere which could be birded very quickly. Fortunately for me, Brandon Locks lived up to its hotspot potential, but unfortunately for Julie we did not watch birds very quickly that day.

When we arrived at 11:45 a.m. below the dam, I immediately noticed a medium-sized tern flying over the shallow river near the Brandon Road bridge. When I viewed this breeding-plumaged adult through binoculars, I was instantly struck by the tern's striking no-neck appearance and the prominent white cheek line, which was outlined by a black cap and gray throat. Without a doubt, I had chanced upon Illinois' second Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisae*)!

The tern's white cheeks and gray underparts (throat, breast, and belly) were most obvious in the overcast

light conditions present during the initial hours of observation. When I departed at 2:10 p.m., the bright sunlight had somewhat obscured these two significant field marks. However, when I returned at 5:30 p.m., these features were once again evident in the late afternoon sunlight. Overall, deciphering the exact degree of gray of both the underparts and mantle was at times difficult due to varying light conditions. The gray of the underparts did generally appear slightly paler than the gray of the mantle.

I did notice other field marks which were more independent of light conditions. The tern had a small, all red bill as well as short, red legs. Its rump and undertail coverts were white. The upperside of the bird's primaries exhibited a diffused gray trailing edge which was only slightly darker than the mantle. The white underside of the wings displayed much translucency in the flight feathers and a narrow, sharply defined blackish trailing edge on the primaries. When perched, the tern's tail extended well beyond its wing tips.

Fortunately, I was able to capture most of these diagnostic field marks on film. The prevailing high winds did, however, make hand-held 400 mm photography of a darting tern quite a challenge. Not surprisingly, the best photos were those taken in overcast light.

The tern's activities were limited primarily to foraging over the river with Ring-billed Gulls. It never dove into the water, but instead picked at items on or near the river's surface. Once it emitted a raspy call while foraging, apparently in response to a nearby competitor Ring-billed Gull. In a few instances, the tern perched on rocks in the exposed riverbed.

Despite being observed after I left at 6:40 p.m., the Arctic Tern followed the same pattern of other rarities that I have found in the area (e.g. Little Gull, Mew Gull) and was not present the next day. I know for certain that at least five other birders observed the tern the same day I did.

The status of the Arctic Tern in the state was categorized as hypothetical by Bohlen (1989, *The Birds of Illinois*) based on his one-observer sighting at Lake Springfield's Cinder Flats on 3 October 1986 of a first-year immature bird. However, Bohlen did, again, find an Arctic Tern (an adult this time) at this same location 28 June 1992 which remained until 1 July and was confirmed by photos as the state's first record (Bohlen 1993, *Meadowlark* 2:12).

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Chestnut-collared Longspur at Lake Calumet

On 17 April 1993, David Mandel, Christine Philip, and Geoff Williamson found a longspur in the

Meadowlark