

Description

My detailed description is on file with IORC. The Waukegan bird was a typical adult in immaculate alternate (breeding) plumage as shown in most field guides. However, many species exhibit traits at variance with field guides and sometimes even with the technical literature. Indeed, the underparts were not pure white as usually depicted; the throat had a faint creamy tinge, and the breast and abdomen showed a pale rosy bloom. So evident was the cream color that I could use it to spot the sleeping tern among the many white-throated Bonaparte's Gulls. Also, the dorsal surfaces of the folded inner primaries were medium gray, neatly outlined with pale gray, almost white. Wing-tip darkness varies considerably as the pale gray bloom fades to reveal the underlying dark gray. Finally, when the bird closed its eyes, the lower eyelid produced a white semi-circular indentation in the lower outline of the black cap.

Identification

Written documentation of any rarity should include a section on elimination of similar species. Only one tern in the world resembles the Sandwich Tern, the Cayenne Tern of eastern South America. It is sometimes treated as a distinct species, *S. eurygnatha*, but because it interbreeds with *S. sandvicensis*, the two are now considered conspecific by most authorities (e.g. A.O.U. 1983). Typically, the Cayenne Tern has an all-yellow bill and yellow on the tarsus. However, because it varies considerably in these characteristics, for instance having varying amounts of black on the bill (or are variants actually hybrids?), I could not conclusively eliminate *eurygnatha*.

Other records

Before 1986 the Sandwich Tern

had been recorded only once in the inland states and provinces of North America, a bird collected over 100 years ago in spring 1882 at Lucknow, Ontario, near the southeastern coast of Lake Huron (A.O.U. 1983, DeSante and Pyle 1986). On 11 June 1986, Minnesota's first Sandwich Tern, an adult, remained one day and was photographed at Duluth (Kienholz and Backstrom 1986). Michigan's first was an adult seen on 31 July 1987 at St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (Tessen 1987). This record was accepted by the Michigan Bird Records Committee (J. Granlund in litt.).

During the next year, 1988, there were four records, all in Ontario. A bird was viewed for an hour on 24 April in east Hamilton Bay (Weir 1988a). One was seen on 17 May at Long Point (Weir 1988a). An adult was photographed and remained from 14 to 25 June at Presqu'ile Provincial Park (Weir 1988b). An adult was "nicely described" on 7 October at Niagara-on-the-Lake (Weir 1989). These four Ontario records were suspected of representing the same individual bird.

My Waukegan sighting, as noted, occurred the following year, 1989. The inland rarity of this species and its presence in consecutive years, with no immediately previous or subsequent records lead me to suspect that all seven 1986-1989 records pertain to the same individual which wandered through the Great Lakes, visiting Lakes Superior (1986), Michigan (1987 and again in 1989), Ontario (three locations in 1988), and Erie (1988), and adding itself to the state lists of Minnesota, Michigan, and finally Illinois.

The identification and wild origin of the Waukegan Sandwich Tern were accepted by IORC (R. Goetz in litt.). However, the species must remain on the state's hypothetical list as a one-observer sight record until hard evidence such as a specimen, photo, or tape recording is forthcoming. When

will I learn to carry a camera?

Hopefully we will not have to wait another 100 years before a Sandwich Tern again graces the Great Lakes.

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