

and Larsson 1995) for both male and female, though it is often stated that the Arctic Tern's bill is shorter than a Common's in the field guides. Again, caution should be used for usefulness of this field mark.

Often observers mentioned the tail projection beyond the primaries was not that noticeable and appeared an even length with the primaries, possibly just one-quarter inch longer. This was perhaps due to the fact that the tail was often raised while the male bird pranced around in courtship and there probably was some tail wear as summer progressed (Fig. 4).

The Arctic Tern flew with a slow-motion, floating, or buoyant flight. Several observers mentioned just how tropicbird-like the tern looked; several times as the tail streamers merged and wafted in the air, the Arctic Tern did look reminiscent of a tropicbird in flight (Fig. 5). In fact, the different flap and flight pattern was a character that tipped off the original observers, Hughes and Bohlen, as to the bird's identity. The translucent lighter gray primaries along with the lack of a dark grayish wedge, from above, in the primaries, and a thinner winged look were striking differences from the Common Terns present. This last field identification character in flight is strikingly illustrated in comparison with other *sterna* terns in Kaufman (1990) and Harris et al. (1996). See Figures 6 and 7.

Other characters for a positive identification included a slightly smaller overall size than the Common Terns; a steep forehead (though some observers mentioned seeing this feature in Commons); a gray belly and flanks extending well up into the face just below the eye; a black cap often showing a narrow white line below the cap and meeting the gray in the cheek and face; the gray ventral feathers extending up to the throat and lower jaw exhibiting more gray than any other tern species (though several Common Terns were noticeably gray ventrally they were never as gray as the Arctic); the black cap extending nearly to the gape; a lack of white above the bill that most if not all the other Commons exhibited; the upper surface of the wings showing a lighter gray with lighter secondaries and no dark wedge, as in all of the Commons; and the undersurface of the primaries exhibiting a clean black line at the primary tips unlike the diffused black line of the Common Terns. These last two characters were very reliable field identification characteristics all summer long while the bird was in flight.

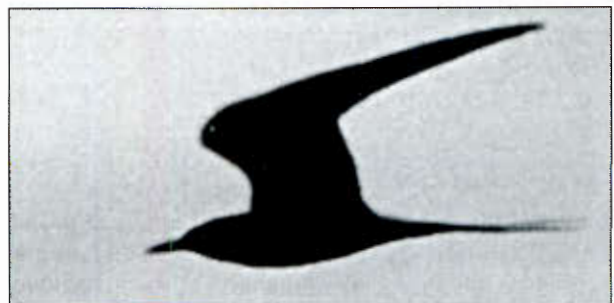
On 31 July, the Arctic Tern's bill was turning a very darkish blood red color much different from the brighter blood red during the earlier breeding season and at no time could any trace of a black tip to the bill be seen. In fact, I would describe the adult Common Tern bills as being orange-red and the Arctic's as



**Figure 4.** Arctic Tern. 27 June 2001. Great Lakes Naval Training Center Marina, Lake County. Note the short tarsi, almost as if the bird was sitting on its feet. Also note the cheek pattern gray to white to black. Photo by Carolyn Fields.



**Figure 5.** Arctic Tern in flight. July 2001. Great Lakes Naval Training Center Marina, Lake County. Photo by Eric Walters.



**Figure 6.** Arctic Tern in flight. GLNCTC Marina, Lake County. July 2001. Note: A combination of short bill, small head and long tail gives Arctic Tern in flight the appearance of having its wings set far forward on its body. Common Tern has a larger head, longer bill and shorter tail than Arctic, so in flight, its wings appear to be set farther back on its body (from *Advanced Birding* by K. Kaufmann. Houghton-Mifflin 1990). Photo by Eric Walters.