

New Tern Records from Southeastern Washington and Northern Idaho

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RECENT sight and specimen records provide new information on the occurrence of several species of terns in southeastern Washington and northern Idaho. An account of these records is presented here.

Burleigh (1973) reports that terns of the genus *Sterna* are "rather scarce and irregular transients" in Idaho and that he succeeded in collecting only seven specimens over an 11-year period, presumably from 1947 to 1958 (Burleigh 1972). Recent impoundments along the Snake River have changed the character of this river in southeastern Washington and in the Lewiston region of Idaho, possibly accounting for the apparent increase of terns, both in numbers and in species, visiting this region.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

Burleigh (1972) lists this species as a fairly common but local summer resident in the southern part of Idaho and as of casual occurrence as far north as Adams County. Apparently the first record of *forsteri* from the state's panhandle is of one taken by the writer at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers at Lewiston, Nez Perce County, on 10 July 1979. The lone tern, observed on both the Idaho and Washington (Whitman County) sides of the Snake River, was in a mixed flock of California Gulls *Larus californicus* and Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* when collected. Data for this specimen, no. 79-586 in Washington State University's Conner Museum (WSUCM), are as follows: female with nonossified skull; left ovary, 7 x 11 mm; largest ovum, 3 x 3 mm; exposed culmen, 37.8 mm; wing, 261.0 mm; tail, 152.0 mm; tarsus, 25.9 mm; weight, 143 g. The writer's previous easternmost record of *forsteri* in Washington was at Rock Lake, Whitman County, where one adult was seen on 23 August 1976.

Although Forster's Tern is not known to breed in northern Idaho, breeding colonies are known from south-central Washington (Weber and Larrison 1977).

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Burleigh (1972) describes *hirundo* as a "rare spring transient, and an irregular and scarce fall transient" in the northern part of Idaho. He lists only one spring record (8 June 1950 along the Snake River at Lewiston) and several scattered autumn sight and specimen records for Latah and Nez Perce counties.

The writer adds the following records, all from the Snake River between Lewiston, Nez Perce County, Idaho, and Asotin, Asotin County, Washington: two adults on 1 September 1977; one adult on 8 September 1977; a flock of five on 26 July 1978, one of which was collected at Asotin (WSUCM no. 78-403; female with ossified skull; left ovary granular, 9 x 4 mm; largest ovum, 2 x 2 mm); one immature female (WSUCM no. 78-472) taken in Idaho about 9 km south of Lewiston on 6 September 1978; one adult seen on 14 September 1978; three adults and one immature observed on 19 September 1978; one adult on 5 May 1979; a male (WSUCM no. 79-585; partially ossified skull; left testis, 5 x 3 mm) collected on 21 June 1979 at Asotin.

This species, though still uncommon, is apparently a more frequent transient and visitor in the Lewiston region than in the days of Burleigh's field work (1947-1958).

Godfrey (1966) lists the westernmost breeding locality for the Common Tern as Alberta. Previous reports of *hirundo* breeding in south-central Washington (Larrison and Sonnenberg 1968, Weber and Larrison 1977) are undocumented and presumably in error. Since the similar-plumaged *forsteri* does breed in this region of Washington, reports of breeding *hirundo* in the eastern part of the state will probably prove to be *forsteri*. However, records of Common Tern in eastern Washington during the months of May, June, and July suggest the possibility of breeding. Presumably nonbreeding *hirundo* are also known from Washington's coastal waters: 4 adults and 7 immatures were seen at Jetty Island, Snohomish County, from at least 28 June through July 1978 (Manuwal et al. 1979).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

The A.O.U. Check-list (1957) lists the Arctic Tern as breeding in the northern parts of the Northern Hemisphere, as migrating offshore in the eastern Pacific Ocean and along certain coastal regions of the Atlantic Ocean, as wintering in the Southern Hemisphere in sub-Antarctic and Antarctic waters, and as occurring accidentally at several locations: Colorado (near Denver), western New York (Ithaca), south-central Alberta (Belvedere), southeastern Ontario (Toronto), Hawaii (Hilo, Oahu), New Zealand, and the Black Sea. While further inland records have accumulated since the time of the 1957 check-list, it is clear that this species was historically considered to be purely accidental anywhere in the interior of the contiguous United States.

Although no records of the Arctic Tern are included in the most recent distributional account of Idaho's avifauna (Burleigh 1972), a first-year immature tern collected by Burleigh on 30 September 1953 along the Snake River at Lewiston, Nez Perce County, and initially identified by Burleigh as *hirundo*, was subsequently reidentified as *paradisaea* by R.C. Laybourne (Burleigh 1973). This is the first record of the Arctic Tern from Idaho.

In discussing the reidentification of this specimen, Burleigh (1973) quotes Laybourne, who summarizes what she observes as the differences between immature Common and Arctic terns: "The characters that distinguish *paradisaea* from *hirundo* are: back darker gray; rump and tail coverts gray, but paler than the back. Also the second outer primary markings are diagnostic. In *paradisaea* the tip of this primary is

gray, extending from about 25 to 32 mm, and the stripe along the midrib on the inner vane is much narrower and paler gray than in *hirundo*. In *hirundo* the tip of the second outer primary is dark gray for about 37 to 60 mm, the outer vane and stripe along midrib on the inner vane are dark gray, and the inner vane stripe is much wider than in *paradisaea*." Apparently this character can be used to differentiate between adult *hirundo* and adult *paradisaea*: the writer's examination of adult specimens of both species at WSUCM indicates that the length of gray on the second outer primary for *hirundo* exceeds that of *paradisaea*.

Another plumage character, one not mentioned by either Burleigh or Laybourne, that helps distinguish between immatures of the two species is the distinct bar across the wing (from the carpal joint to the body) of *hirundo* that is formed by the dusky anterior wing-coverts. In *paradisaea*, this effect is not as pronounced since the lesser wing-coverts do not contrast sharply with the darker mantle.

Surprisingly, neither Laybourne nor Burleigh mentions the reidentified specimen's tarsal length, a measurement that would clearly separate first-fall immature birds of the two species. Godfrey (1966) says autumn immature *paradisaea* have shorter tarsi than *hirundo* but that plumage is very similar. He gives no tarsal measurements for immatures of either species but lists the following for adult males (average in parenthesis); 19.6-22.5 mm (20.8 mm) for *hirundo* and 15.0-16.7 mm (15.8) for *paradisaea*. In fact, the tarsal measurements (21.0 mm and 22.0 mm for two females; 19.0 mm for one male) of the three first-autumn *hirundo* at WSUCM exceed those of the 13 adult *paradisaea* specimens at the museum. Thus, publication of the tarsal measurement of the tern collected by Burleigh on 30 September 1953 would conclusively establish its identity as either *hirundo* or *paradisaea*.

The writer observed an adult tern, assumed at the time to be *hirundo*, along the Snake River in the vicinity of Lewiston, Nez Perce County, Idaho, and Clarkston, Asotin County, Washington, from 8 September 1977 to 6 October 1977. This tern superficially resembled a Common Tern and would have been identified as such by reference to standard field guides, except that its bill lacked the black tip nearly always present in *hirundo*. During the period of observation, winter plumage replaced summer plumage, and on 6 October 1977, the writer collected the tern (WSUCM no. 77-436) on the Washington (Clarkston) side of the river. Data for this specimen: adult female with ossified skull; exposed culmen, 26.0 mm; wing, 233.0 mm; tail, 112.0 mm; tarsus, 15.0 mm; weight, 90.0 g. A tarsus of 15.0 mm identifies this specimen as an Arctic Tern rather than a Common Tern. Moreover, the length of gray (25.0 mm) on the tips of the second outer primaries falls within Laybourne's range for *paradisaea*. This specimen represents the second record of the Arctic Tern from Idaho.

A third record of *paradisaea* for Idaho is of an adult bird the writer observed at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers in Nez Perce County on 3 August 1978. This tern displayed field marks of *paradisaea* in breeding plumage (those the writer finds useful: all blood-red bill, more uniformly gray mantle than *hirundo*, and almost always grayer underparts than *hirundo*; the last character, however, is only supplemental to the first two). The Snake River at this location straddles the Washington-Idaho border, and the tern (WSUCM no. 78-397) was collected just inside the Washington border in Whitman County. Data for this specimen: female; left ovary (granular), 8 x 2 mm; no molt; exposed culmen, 34.2 mm; wing, 262.0 mm; tail, 153.0 mm; tarsus, 16.9 mm; weight, 85.5 g. The tarsal measurement confirms identification of this specimen as *paradisaea*, and the length of gray (33.0 mm) on the

second outer primaries falls closer to Laybourne's range (25-32 mm) for *paradisaea* than her range (37-60 mm) for *hirundo*.

The Arctic Terns collected by the writer on 6 October 1977 and 3 August 1978 are also the second and third definite records of this species in eastern Washington (east of the Cascades). Eastern Washington's first record is of one collected by Hanson (1958) on 21 May 1957 along the Columbia River near Ringold, Franklin County, about 170 km west of the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers. Additional records of *paradisaea* from eastern Washington are as follows: one in summer plumage seen by R.E. Woodley on 2 October 1977 at the Yakima River delta, near Richmond, Benton County (Rogers 1978); two adults in summer plumage seen by the writer on 19 September 1979 along the Snake River, Whitman County.

Perhaps *paradisaea* is a more frequent migrant in eastern Washington and northern Idaho than previously known.

Washington's ornithological event of the year in 1977 was the discovery of breeding Arctic Terns at Jetty Island, Snohomish County, during the summer of that year (Manuwal et al. 1979). This record represents a 1330 km southeastward extension of the Pacific coast breeding range of *paradisaea*.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

Burleigh (1972) lists the Caspian Tern as "a regular but not common summer visitant in the southern part of the state; recorded once in northern Idaho." The one northern Idaho record he cites is of two birds seen at the reservoir east of Lewiston Orchards, Nez Perce County, on 31 July 1958.

Apparently the second record of the Caspian Tern from northern Idaho is of two adult birds seen by the writer along the Clearwater River at its confluence with the Snake River at Lewiston, Nez Perce County, on 19 July 1978. One of the terns was collected, and the data for this specimen (WSUCM no. 78-398) is as follows: adult female with ossified skull; left ovary, 15 x 10 mm; largest ovum, 3 x 3 mm; no molt; exposed culmen, 71.0 mm; wing, 418.0 mm; tail, 145.0 mm; tarsus, 46.0 mm; weight, 708 g.

Jewett et al. (1953) list summer records of *caspia* from south-central Washington but give no records from the state's southeasternmost counties. Weber and Larrison (1977) list this species as an uncommon, scattered summer resident in south-central Washington and as a probable rare migrant and summer resident in Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman counties. Noteworthy, then, is the sighting of six adult Caspian Terns by the writer along the Snake River in Asotin and Whitman counties in the vicinity of Silcott, Asotin County, from 19 July to 10 August 1978. Although the terns were observed on several occasions always as a group about one of the islands in the Silcott area, there was no evidence of breeding. Frequent use of these islands by boaters may preclude their use as breeding sites for colonial nesters, such as *caspia*.

Caspian Terns were also present along the Snake from Silcott to Lewiston in 1979, when the writer saw one to two adults from 22 June to 25 July.

Prior to 1978, the writer's easternmost record of the Caspian Tern along the Snake River in Washington was in the vicinity of its confluence with the Columbia River, about 145 km west of Silcott, Asotin County. The slack water created by the recently completed (1975) Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River southwest of Pullman, Whitman County, possibly accounts for the Lewiston and Silcott records.

Black Tern, *Chlidonias niger*

Burleigh (1972) lists this species as a fairly common but local summer resident over much of Idaho. In northern Idaho, he mentions breeding records for Kootenai and Benewah counties. Along the Snake River in Nez Perce County, Burleigh describes *niger* as a fairly common spring and fall transient. The writer has found the Black Tern to be an uncommon migrant in this region (Nez Perce County) and has only two sight records: one along the Snake in the Lewiston-Clarkston area of Idaho and Washington on 6 September 1978; two on 20 May 1979 at the same location.

In eastern Washington, this species is known as a breeder and migrant on the lakes and sloughs of the Upper Sonoran Zone and lower part of the Transition Zone (Jewett et al. 1953). Weber and Larrison (1977) list *niger* as an uncommon migrant in Washington's southeasternmost block of counties (Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman) and as a probable summer resident on some of the scabland ponds in northwestern Whitman County. On 4 August 1978, the writer collected two Black Terns (WSUCM skeletal specimen no.'s 79-476 and 79-477) from a flock of 20 immature and adult birds at a scabland pond in northwestern Whitman County several km northwest of Lamont. I.O. Buss and the writer saw a flock of about 100 at the same location on 29 July 1979. In both instances, the terns were presumed to be migrants. At a visit to the same pond on 11 June 1980, the writer saw three adult *niger*. Two of the terns, an apparent breeding pair, excitedly flew above and around the writer in his unsuccessful search for a nest.

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