

AN EXTANT SPECIMEN OF ARCTIC TERN FROM COLORADO

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During a recent examination of tern specimens at the University of Colorado Museum, Boulder, Bruce Webb and Peter Moulton found that CU specimen 8108, labelled Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), was an immature Arctic Tern (*S. paradisaea*). It was one of two terns collected from a flock of "a dozen or more" feeding at a small lake near Windsor, Weld County, Colorado, on 16 September 1912 by Osterhout (1913).

The initial reidentification of CU 8108 was based on a 14.1 mm. tarsal measurement. According to Ridgway (1919), tarsus length of *paradisaea* ranges from 13.5 to 16.0 mm whereas that of *hirundo* ranges from 17.5 to 20.5 mm (ranges of sexes combined). The diagnostic primary pattern of the Arctic Tern, described by Roxie C. Laybourne (in Burleigh 1973), is that the second outermost primary tip is gray from the tip inward about 25 to 32 mm, whereas in the Common Tern it is dark gray inward from the tip about 37 to 60 mm. The dark tip of the second outermost primary of CU 8108 is shorter and narrower than that of a Common Tern (Figure 1). At our request, Allan R. Phillips measured CU 8108 and provided the following: tarsi 14.1 mm;

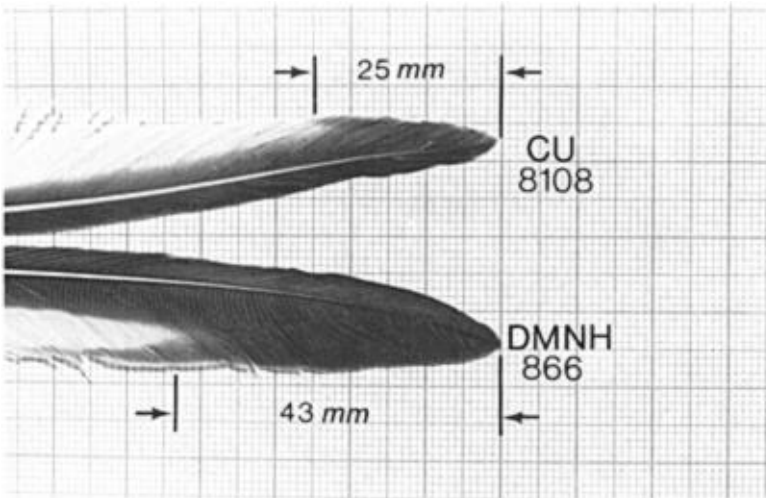


Figure 1. Second outermost primary of Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*; University of Colorado Museum 8108) and Common Tern (*S. hirundo*; Denver Museum of Natural History 866). Note the narrower primary width and less extensively dark tip of the Arctic Tern. The reduced pigmentation of Arctic Tern primaries results in their greater translucency and narrower dark trailing edges.

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exposed culmen 26.5 mm; bill depth (at anterior edge of nostril) 6.3 mm; wing chord (both) 237 mm, no sheathing; tail 115.7 mm. These measurements, plus comparisons with Arctic and Common tern specimens at the Denver Museum of Natural History, confirmed the reidentification.

Phillips and we examined all other Colorado Common Tern specimens at these two museums, and particularly Osterhout's other collected tern, and found them to be correctly identified. The location of the two pre-1900 Colorado Arctic Tern specimens cited by Bailey and Niedrach (1965) is still unknown. For this reason, the Colorado Field Ornithologists Official Records Committee ruled that Arctic Tern should be dropped from the Colorado list due to insufficient or unconvincing details (Reddall 1976). These two records presumably were the basis for listing Arctic Tern as "accidental in Colorado (near Denver)" in the AOU Check-list (1957). As with the Idaho specimen record (Burleigh 1973) and two Arizona specimen records (Monson and Russell 1975), this addition to the Colorado list involved an immature bird, originally mislabeled as a Common Tern, collected within the early September to early October period of fall migration.

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