

White-winged Tern in North Carolina

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At approximately 2:20 pm on 13 August 1994, the senior author observed an adult White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) in advanced molt at Bodie Island, Dare County, NC. The bird was feeding in and flying over the ponds, dikes, and marshes at the Bodie Island Lighthouse pond. It was in the company of four Black Terns (*C. niger*), two of which were in almost full alternate plumage and two of which were in advanced molt. He observed the White-winged Tern with 8x40 binoculars for approximately five minutes, at distances from 10 to 130 feet, allowing excellent viewing. Several additional birders saw the tern on that date, including Roger McNeill, Lex Glover, and Bert Fisher; it could not be found on 14 August or later dates.

The following features were seen on the tern when in flight: (a) a completely white rump; (b) a barely notched tail, which was extremely pale gray above and pure white below; (c) the presence of some black feathering in the wing lining; and (d) the complete lack of a dark bar on the sides of the breast which distinguished it easily from the molting Black Terns with which it was flying. In addition, the marginal and lesser coverts still appeared paler than the rest of the upper wing feathers, despite the stage of molt the bird was in. This paleness, however, was definitely grayer than other birds the senior author has seen elsewhere in full alternate plumage. The bird's legs and feet were a dull orange-red, noticeably brighter than the dull, dark ashened-red legs and feet of the other terns in the group.

In addition to the features above, the senior author noted the following marks on the White-winged Tern. The bill was black. The forehead was white; the crown was white at the front, blending to a streaky black toward the nape. The base of the nape was white, giving a bridled appearance. The bird had a fairly distinct black eye-stripe. The mantle, back, and scapulars were mostly gray with a few scallop-shaped black markings on the scapulars. The underparts were pure white with the exception of a few very pale and indistinct gray smudges on the sides and belly and one distinct dark patch on the left flank. The marginal and lesser coverts appeared slightly lighter in color compared with the uniform gray of the rest of the upper wing surface. The

outer three primary feathers were quite dark. The underwing was basically white with black tips and bases to some of the feathering in the wing lining. The undersurface of the flight feathers appeared light gray with a darker color through the primaries.

Mathieson had considerable prior experience with White-winged Terns, as the species is an uncommon to locally common austral summer visitor to Australia. He has seen the species in alternate and in basic plumages as well as many variations in between these two plumages.

This is the first record of White-winged Tern that the N.C. Bird Records Committee has accepted for North Carolina. Because no photographs were obtained, the species has been placed on the Provisional List (*Chat* 60:138). This committee had failed to accept two previous reports of White-winged Tern (*Chat* 56:54, *Chat* 59:87).

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