

A Midwinter Specimen of the Bridled Tern in South Carolina

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The Bridled Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*) nests throughout the Atlantic-Caribbean region, from the Bahamas to Belize and coastal Venezuela (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). It is fairly common off the coast of the Carolinas during May-October (Clapp *et al.* 1983). In addition, the species has been recorded about sixteen times onshore in both states, including eight specimens from South Carolina and two from North Carolina. Most onshore records are associated with hurricanes. The latest autumn record for South Carolina occurred on 16 October 1988, when D.M. Forsythe saw an individual off Charleston (McNair and Post 1993). The latest record for North Carolina is represented by an offshore specimen collected 9 November 1986 (NCSM 14998). A late winter report also exists for North Carolina: A bird was sighted on 28 February 1997 off Cape Hatteras by Brian Patteson. Even in Florida, however, the Bridled Tern is rare in winter, and Stevenson and Anderson (1994) list only nine acceptable winter reports (including five specimens).

On 18 January 1999, Glover and Newkirk found a freshly-killed Bridled Tern on Pawleys Island, Georgetown County, S.C. The bird was found in the driveway of a suburban residence, about 300 m from the ocean. The tern had apparently struck the side of the house during heavy fog that covered the island that day. Glover was able to see the bird's impact point on the light-colored wall of the residence.

The specimen is a juvenile male. It was prepared as a standard study skin, with detached, extended wing (including left humerus), and partial skeleton preserved (Charleston Museum No. 99.22.01). The left testis had a diameter of 1.3 mm; right, 1.4 mm. Mass was 99.7 g. Total length was 33.2 cm; tail length, 13 cm. The wing span was 78 cm, flattened wing length was 25.5 cm, and wing area (Pennycuick 1989) was 538 cm. The stomach was empty. The bird had oil residues on the lower abdomen. The supraorbital salt glands were well vascularized; the left gland was 16.6 x 7.9 mm.

We thank John Gerwin for his data on the November North Carolina specimen and Brian Patteson for the information on his February North Carolina sighting.

Literature Cited

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