

**From:** azfo@azfo.org  
**Subject:** ABC Report of Arctic Tern observed on 02\_June\_2010 by David Stejskal  
**Date:** June 2, 2010 at 10:43 PM  
**To:** Kurtrad@att.net, drbrdr@worldnet.att.net, ghrosenberg@comcast.net  
**Cc:** dstejskal@cox.net

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## **Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

**Date observed:** 02 June 2010  
**Initial observer(s):** Dave Stejskal  
**Exact location:** The southeast shoreline of San Carlos Reservoir just off the fishing/camping site called Wire Corral  
**County:** Graham  
**City:** Peridot  
**Elevation:** 3000'

**Submitted by:** David Stejskal.

**Number observed:** 1  
**Age:** adult  
**Sex:** unknown

**Time observed:** 2:30 p.m.  
**Duration of observation:** 1.5-2 minutes  
**Minimum distance from bird:** maybe as close as 150m  
**Optics used:** 10X40 Leica binoculars, 30X-60X Leica spotting scope  
**Position of sun:** Looking straight out from the shoreline, the sun was high at 11:00 and I picked up the tern when it was at 1:00 (it was flying to left towards sun)  
**Habitat:** Expansive reservoir on Gila River in Lower Sonoran Zone

**Others who observed this bird:** none  
**Anyone known to disagree:**

**Was the bird identified before consulting any guides:** yes  
**Identification guides used:** None - I didn't bring any with me on this trip.  
**Were notes taken before or after the observation:** After  
**How well was the bird seen:** Very Well

### **Detailed description:**

This was a medium-sized tern, larger than a Black or Least, and smaller than an Elegant or a Royal. My initial look was in good, strong light as the bird was flying offshore from right to left. The entire upperparts, including the upper surface of the wings and flight feathers was uniform pale pearly gray without any dark feathering anywhere. The entire undersurface of the wing was uniform very pale with a very distinct and thin dark rear trailing edge to the primary tips. The entire cap, crown, and nape were black. The bill was short and thin for a medium-sized tern and appeared uniform dark red. The tail was quite long and appeared uniform white and tapered to a long fine point. The underparts appeared to be a much darker shade of gray than the upperparts, and the underparts contrasted strongly with a fairly broad white line across the face that separated the black cap from the darker underparts. I couldn't see the legs. The tern appeared to have a relatively short neck, giving the bird a look of being foreshortened with a long tail. It is interesting to note that two more Arctic Terns were seen the same day at Morgan L. near Farmington, NM, so a region-wide movement may have been underway.

### **Vocalizations:**

none heard

### **Behavior:**

As the bird flew past, I noted that the flight was much more buoyant-looking and languid than an Elegant Tern, Common Tern, or Forster's Tern would show in flight.

### **What similar species were considered and why were they eliminated:**

Common Tern in alternate plumage has darker primaries (above and below), a longer, thicker, black-tipped bill, a longer neck, a shorter tail, and more uniformly pale underparts. The shape is quite different than this bird, looking long-necked and relatively shorter-tailed. The flight is less languid as well. Forster's Tern in alternate plumage is uniform white below, has a relatively longer neck and shorter tail, has a longer, thicker, black-tipped bill, has a different underwing pattern, and has a less languid flight. Elegant Tern is larger, has a long orange bill, shorter tail, etc. Roseate Tern has an even longer tail, has a black bill, and is uniformly much paler overall.

### **Experience with species:**

I actually have much more experience with alternate Arctic Tern than I do with alternate Common or Forster's, but I've still seen 1000's of those species compared to 10,000's of Arctics in alternate plumage (I've been guiding in Alaska every June since 1987 and see at least 100's of Arctics every June). I've seen 1000's of Elegants, smaller numbers of Royals and only a few dozen Roseates.

**Experience with similar species:**

See above

**Was the bird photographed:** No

**Submitter name:** David Stejskal

**Submitter email:** dstejskal@cox.net

**Date and time submitted:** 6/3/2010 1:43:10 AM

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Url:[http://www.azfo.org/ArizonaBirdReview/SubmittedHtml/ARTE\\_Peridot\\_Stejskal\\_02\\_June\\_2010.html](http://www.azfo.org/ArizonaBirdReview/SubmittedHtml/ARTE_Peridot_Stejskal_02_June_2010.html)