

Bridled Terns Along the Mississippi Coast

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On 2 September 1985, immediately following the landfall of Hurricane Elena, we each saw Bridled Terns (*Sterna anaethetus*) independently along the Mississippi coast. Toups observed an adult and 2 juveniles at Gulfport beach, Harrison County, Hodges saw an adult and a juvenile at Ocean Springs beach, Jackson County, and King saw 2 adults along Gulfport beach. We each noted large, elegant terns with white foreheads and supercilia; black crowns, eye-stripes, and napes; and contrasting gray upperparts. Also seen were white underparts, dark gray wings and tails, and white outer tail feathers. On the juveniles, Toups and Hodges saw pale scaling on the mantle and upperwing coverts.

All three of us were observing under adverse conditions, with strong southerly winds, intermittent rain, and overcast skies. Observations were from 5 seconds to a minute; the birds were moving rapidly. We used 7 X 35 binoculars, and no photographs were taken.

On 29 October 1985 Toups and Hodges saw nine Bridled Terns in Hancock and Harrison counties, Mississippi. Five birds were observed at rest as close as 3 m; four were seen in flight. One of the resting birds was photographed. These birds were associated with Hurricane Juan, which was stalled off the Louisiana coast. All were juveniles, with narrow white feather edges on the mantle, scapulars, and upperwing coverts giving a scaly effect. On the same day, Hodges and Toups also saw seven large terns with dark upperparts that could not be positively identified, but that were either Bridled or Sooty (*S. fuscata*) terns (Hodges and Toups also saw three Sooty Terns that day).

Prior to these sightings and photographs, the only records of Bridled Terns for Mississippi were of a specimen picked up at Gulfport on 26 May 1979, and one seen at the Hattiesburg sewage lagoons, Forrest County, on 13 September 1979 by Larry Gates and Terrie Fairley [Gates]. Concurrent with the 2 September 1985 coastal sightings, a Bridled Tern was also seen at the Hattiesburg sewage lagoons by Larry and Terrie Gates (see "Birds Around the State" in this issue).

Literature Cited

- Gates, L., and T. Fairley. 1979. Bridled Tern: First observation of a live bird in Mississippi. *Miss. Kite* 9: 40-41.
- Hays, M.B. 1979. First record of the Bridled Tern in Mississippi. *Miss. Kite* 9:39.