

Sooty Terns on Horn Island, Mississippi

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On 14 October 1978, at about 07:30, Cooley saw a dark tern flying over the Gulf of Mexico south of Horn Island; he was unable to identify the bird because of its distance from the island. At 10:15 Jackson discovered and photographed a Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*, Fig. 1) on the Gulf beach of the island. The tern appeared exhausted and it allowed Jackson to approach within one meter before flying. On the morning of 15 October, all of us observed at least three Sooty Terns feeding in the Gulf south of Horn Island. Our observations of Sooty Terns on Horn Island had been preceded by strong southerly winds during the night of 13-14 October.

While the Sooty Tern is a rare bird in Mississippi, there are two specimen records for the state. Oliver L. Austin, Jr. found a Sooty Tern on Petit Bois Island that had been dead for about two weeks on 17 June 1956 (Newman 1956), and Roy Stephens collected a female on 20 September 1957, near Canton, Madison County (Gandy and Turcotte 1970). Sooty Terns are known to nest in the Chandeleur Islands of Louisiana (Lowery 1974), and there are several records of the species from Alabama (Imhof 1976). Several authors (e.g., Imhof 1976) have commented on the association of Sooty Tern records from the northern Gulf coast with the passage of Gulf storms.

## Literature Cited

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Lowery, G.H., Jr. 1974. Louisiana birds. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.  
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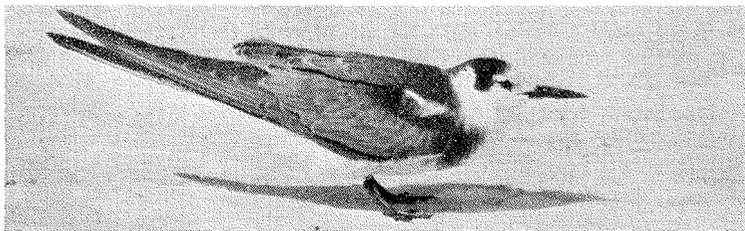


Figure 1. Sooty Tern photographed on Horn Island, Mississippi, 14 Oct. 1978.