

First Record of the Bridled Tern in Mississippi

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On 26 May 1979, while marking Least Tern nests in Mississippi City, Mississippi (30°23' Lat. 89°00' Long.), I found a mummified carcass of a tern in the sand next to the seawall, approximately 65 m from the high tide line. I collected the specimen, and upon examination at the National Museum of Natural History, I identified it as a Bridled Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*), a species not previously recorded from Mississippi. The specimen has been deposited at the U.S. National Museum (USNM #576070).

The bird was an adult with the following characteristics still evident: (1) white forehead and eyebrow stripe extending beyond the eye, (2) light gray feathers in the tail, and (3) light gray feathers on the hind neck -- all of which distinguish it from the similar Sooty Tern (*S. fuscata*). Bridled Terns are seen regularly on the Atlantic Coast from North Carolina to Florida in the summer and fall (Clapp, R. B. and W. Hoffman, pers. comm.), but heretofore have only been recorded sporadically in the Gulf of Mexico. This species is seen occasionally off Clearwater, Florida, but there are relatively few records for other states bordering the Gulf (Kale, H. W., II. 1977. Florida Region. Am. Birds 31:988-992., W. Hoffman, pers. comm.). However, Charles D. Duncan, who has been involved recently with the at-sea surveys off Dauphin Island, Alabama, in the Gulf of Mexico, stated (pers. comm.) that Bridled Terns have been commonly observed along windrows of sargassum weed from April to September; as many as 14 were seen at one time. The species is clearly more abundant in the Gulf than has been previously supposed. I thank Roger Clapp and Wayne Hoffman for aid in identifying the specimen and for helpful comments on the manuscript; I also thank Roxie Laybourne for comments on the plumage of the specimen.