

## Occurrence of Large-billed Tern (*Phaetusa simplex*) in Ohio

*A long overdue documentation*

*Vincent P. McLaughlin*

ON MAY 29, 1954, the author and two additional observers, Evan C. Dresel and William H. Findley (both now deceased), were watching a migration of terns at Evans Lake, Ohio. This large artificial lake is located south of the town of Poland. On a sandbar at the western edge of the lake they noticed three terns together. There was one each of Caspian and Common tern, in bright breeding plumage and a third tern between them which they did not recognize. The third bird was intermediate in size between Caspian and Common but of much stockier build. It had relatively shorter legs. The legs and feet were yellow in color. The unknown bird had a short dark tail and a back darker than those of the accompanying terns, with the back color changing to black at the cap. Most interesting was the heavy yellow bill, which seemed out of proportion — to the point of making the bird seem “top-heavy.” The typical tern’s cap terminated near the end of the bill, leaving a white forehead. None of the observers had any idea of the bird’s identity. McLaughlin who had drawing materials with him, sketched the bird while in the field and included the features noted above. All observers agreed with the details as sketched on the spot and also later when it was completed in full water color.

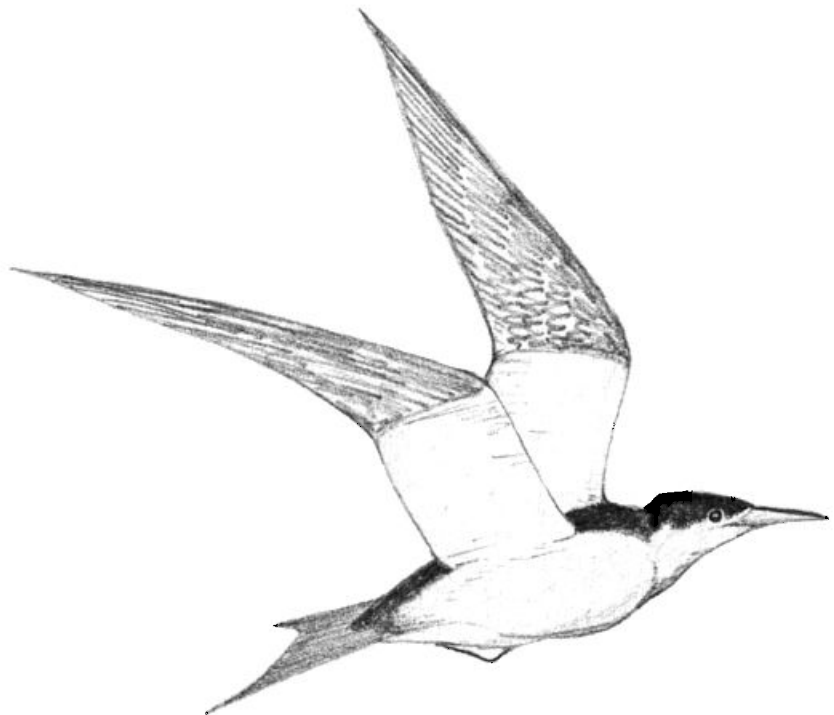
The sketch was subsequently sent to Kenneth C. Parkes of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who identified it as the Large-billed Tern (*Phaetusa simplex*).

This Evans Lake sighting documents the second known occurrence of Large-billed Tern in North America. The previous, first sight record, was of a bird seen by several observers at Lake Calumet, Chicago, Illinois. First seen July 15, 1949, it remained for approximately ten

days (Zimmermann, *The Audubon Bulletin*, Ill. Aud. Soc., No. 71, Sept. 1949: 4-5). During that period it was carefully studied by many observers who noted the bird’s uniform gray back and tail and primuline yellow feet and legs. When the sighting was written up it was accompanied with a sketch done from life by Richard Zusi.

THE RANGE OF THIS SPECIES is tropical South America from Colombia and Trinidad south to Peru and Argentina, mainly along the sandy banks of South America’s great rivers and estuaries. It breeds on sandbanks along large deep rivers.

—26 Water Street, Poland, OH 44514.



*Large-billed Tern (Phaetusa simplex). Evans Lake, Ohio, May 24, 1954. Drawing/Vincent P. McLaughlin.*