

FOUR MEDIUM-SIZED TERNS







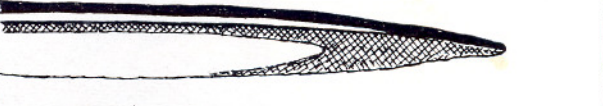

• *Common Tern alighting at nest in Northern Ireland, U.K.*

Photo: C. D. Deane

Four Medium-sized Terns *Sterna* spp.

In Australian waters, four medium-sized terns present problems of identification for the field worker. Many of these difficulties can be resolved with precision only by reference to characters which cannot be observed unless the bird is 'in the hand'. The following diagrams

of the first and second outer primaries of these species demonstrate the diagnostic patterns. These, together with associated measurements and other information, should enable banders to identify trapped birds or beach-washed specimens.

BILL (from feathers)	TARSUS	TAIL	UNDERPARTS	
31-38mm	19-23	tip level with wing tips	grey/breeding/ white/non-br./	 <p>COMMON <i>S. hirundo</i></p>
<p>Summer visitor Q'ld.(Cairns) - Vic.(Port Phillip). Rivers, estuaries, sand-bars, freshwater swamps.</p>				 <p>white wedge (cf. <i>striata</i>)</p>
34-42	19-23	extends beyond wing tips	always white, may have rosy tinge	 <p>WHITE-FRONTED <i>S. striata</i></p>
<p>Winter visitor N.S.W.(regular), Vic. & S.A.(irregular). Marine habitats: beaches, reefs.</p>				 <p>narrow band (cf. <i>hirundo</i>)</p>
30-33	15-17	extends just bey- ond wing tips; rump, upper coverts white in winter pl.	grey(breeding) white(non-br.)	<p>ARCTIC <i>S. macrura</i></p>
<p>Nine Aust. records: W.A.(Oct, May), S.A.(Nov), Vic.(Oct, Dec), Tas.(Nov, Jan). Marine habitats, also inland.</p>				 <p>white tip</p>
37-40	19-21	extends well bey- ond wing tips; outer web of streamers white.	always white, with distinct rosy tinge.	<p>ROSEATE <i>S. dougallii</i></p>
<p>Breeds sub-coastal islands tropical Australia, rarely in temperate waters, except W.A.</p>				 <p>(1st and 2nd primaries illustrated above)</p>

Drawings by Author