

ARCTIC TERN

Sterna paradisaea

non-breeding visitor, occasional migrant

monotypic

Well-known for its long-distance migrations (Bourne and Casement 1996), the Arctic Tern breeds throughout high latitudes in the n. Hemisphere and winters at a similar latitudinal range around the Antarctic (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951c, Cramp and Simmons 1985, Higgins and Davies 1996, AOU 1998). It migrates primarily over deep pelagic waters throughout the Atlantic and Pacific, with well-defined passages recorded off California in Apr-May and Jul-Aug. It appears to be a regular spring transient through Hawaiian-Island waters, all but three records being from 15 Apr-9 May and most being of birds observed offshore.

At sea and offshore, approximately 200 Arctic Terns observed off Kona, Hawai'i I, 9 May 1992 represent the high count. It is likely that similar numbers are routinely missed due to the lack of observer effort during the relatively short time period of peak Pacific transit. Other records of multiple individuals at sea have involved 30 observed off Kona 6 May 1990, 27 there 22 Apr 2016, and 6 there 24 Apr 2015 ([CRC data](#); cf. [HRBP](#) 6694); 6 recorded N of Moloka'i 29 Apr 1965 (King 1970); 5 S and E of Hawai'i I 25 Apr 1991 (Spear et al. 1999); 3 off Kona 5 May 1985 (David 1988a; [HRBP](#) 0450-0451, 0719 published *E* 48:28), 3 off O'ahu 15 Apr 1990, and many other records of 1-2 observed at sea or offshore within the passage window of 8 Apr-9 May (e.g., [HRBP](#) 1272, 5359-5360, 5760-5762, 6691, 6694-6695; published *NAB* 62:496). None have been recorded during extensive at-sea surveying at other times of the year (e.g., King 1970, Rowlett 2002; [HICEAS data](#)).

Most records of Arctic Tern on shore have also occurred during this short spring period. In the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* these have included specimens from **Kure** 29 Jul 1968 (dried carcass; Woodward 1972; USNM 544635), **Midway** 20 Apr 2000 (BPBM 184294), and **Lisianski** 29 Apr 1982 (USNM 599920). In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* spring transient Arctic Terns have been recorded 14 Apr-5 May on **Kaua'i** (4 records, 1991-2012; e.g., [HRBP](#) 6692-6693; BPBM 178485), **O'ahu** (7, 1902-2000; e.g., Bryan 1902; BPBM 2022; [HRBP](#) 0231, 0562-0565), **Maui** (4, 1990-2006; e.g., [HRBP](#) 0976-0977), and **Hawai'i I** (4, 1891-2011; e.g., BPBM 4222; Henshaw 1902a, 1902d). The high count for birds seen ashore was 3 together at the Aquafarm near Kahuku 26 Apr 1983. Only three records of fall transients exist from the Hawaiian Islands, all from O'ahu: one was collected at Keehi Lagoon 29 Oct 1966 (*E* 27:83; Clapp 1975; USNM 497116), one was photographed at the Aquafarm near Kahuku 22 Oct 1983 ([HRBP](#) 0619-0621), and one was well documented at the Ki'i unit of JCNWR 10-12 Oct 1998. Several reports from winter months (e.g., *E* 1[3]:4, [DOFAW Waterbird Surveys](#)) have turned out to be [Common Terns](#) or are otherwise unsubstantiated.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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