

GREAT CRESTED TERN

Thalasseus bergii

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

T.b. cristatus

Great Crested Terns breed on tropical oceanic islands throughout the Indian Ocean and from Australia N in the w. Pacific to Tawain, Micronesia, and Kiribati (Pratt et al.1987, Higgins and Davies 1996, Wiles 2005). They are rarely noted away from breeding colonies, although vagrants have reached New Zealand and Lord Howe I, and banded individuals have been recorded dispersing up to 1,000 km away from breeding colonies (Carrick et al. 1957). Latham reportedly may have been sent a specimen from Hawaii in the late 1700s (Finsch and Hartlaub 1867), and on this basis it was included by Dole (1869, 1879), but these reports were appropriately questioned by ornithologists at the turn of the century (Rothschild 1900, Bryan 1901a). The first substantiated record for Hawaii and the AOU area (AOU 1991) was of an adult initially observed at Nu'upia Ponds, KMCAS, *O'ahu* 21 Oct 1988 and remaining there through 7 Aug 1989 (Pyle 1990; [HRBP](#) 0800-0805 published *E* 50:21-22 and *AB* 43:27). It was also observed sitting on a buoy off nearby Kailua Beach Park on 13 Jun 1989. Coincidentally, the same observer (RLP) was responsible for the second record, a well-described adult on Whale Skate, *French Frigate* 20 Aug 1991. Another adult was adequately described from French Frigate 14 Jul-11 Aug 1999 whereas a report of one from Laysan 22 Aug-5 Sep 1992, although quite plausible, is not accompanied by documentation and is considered unsubstantiated here.

Great Crested and [Sandwich](#) terns were placed along with other terns in the genus *Sterna* until split by the AOU (2006). Four subspecies of Great Crested Terns have been recognized, although variation is complex (Higgins and Davies 1996). Photographs and descriptions of individuals reaching Hawaii are consistent with *T.b. cristatus*, the breeding subspecies of Australia and the Pacific.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>