

GULL-BILLED TERN

Gelochelidon nilotica

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

G.n. affinis?

The Gull-billed Tern breeds locally in temperate latitudes throughout N and S America, Eurasia, Africa, and Australia (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951c, Cramp and Simmons 1985, Higgins and Davies 1996, AOU 1998). Movement patterns are poorly understood, although it generally is known to withdraw to tropical latitudes during winter. There are records of vagrants from Nova Scotia, Bermuda, Guam, and New Zealand (Higgins and Davies 1996, Wiles et al. 2000). King (1967) mentions this species for Hawaii but this was an error (W.B. King pers. comm.). Subsequently, a single individual has been recorded in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*. It was first noted at the Honouliuli unit of PHNWR *O'ahu* 11 Jan 1988 (David and Donaldson 1989; [HRBP](#) 0720-0722, 5582-5585, published *E* 49:34-35) and was observed there again 2 Mar 1988. What was presumably the same individual was then observed at Kualapu'u, *Moloka'i* 26 Apr 1988 and at Kealia Pond NWR, *Maui* 5-6 June 1988.

Gull-billed Terns were combined along with other terns in the genus *Sterna* until afforded their own genus by the AOU (2006). The photographs indicate a first-fall bird with dark upper surfaces to the primaries, consistent with the migratory Asian subspecies *G.n. affinis* (see Rogers et al. 2005), but this subspecific identification should be considered tentative. There are 4-5 subspecies of Gull-billed Tern worldwide (Clement 2007, Pyle 2008).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>