

A sighting of Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* near Mangalore, south-western India

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During an official trip to Mulki, Mangalore, south west Karnataka, I was watching the rough monsoon sea on the morning of 5th August 2010 from the balcony of the bungalow (13°2'23"N, 74°47'E) where I was put up. There were several Brahminy Kites *Haliastur indus* fishing but I also noticed a tern flying along with them which I could not identify then. I started off behind it with my 80-400mm lens and managed to take some pictures. After about 30 minutes, the bird flew closer to the shore line and settled briefly on top of the roof of the nearest watch chamber on the beach. This allowed me to capture the bird on perch. Within a few seconds, it was harassed by a passing crow and the tern took off. Next day, I searched 3-4 km of the entire coast in both directions however could not locate the bird.

After checking the field guides, I got the impression that this was probably a Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*. However, after discussing the photos with Rajneesh Suvarna and Arpit Deomurari, it was concluded that the bird was in fact a Bridled Tern *O. anaethetus*. The image of the perching bird (17) shows the characteristic pale nape and brown upper parts while both the pictures shows the white supercilium extending till the eye – eliminating Sooty Tern.

Bridled Terns are known to breed in Vengurla Rocks and undertake an annual mass migration along west coast of India and Sri Lanka in late summer/early fall (de Silva 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). There are records from off-shore waters off Mangalore in recent years (Shivashankar *et al.* 2011). However, it is still rare that such pelagic species are seen from the coast, hence of interest.



photo: M. Patel

17. Bridled Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*.

I wish to thank Rajneesh Suvarna and Arpit Deomurari for identifying the bird from the photos.

References

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In Memoriam

Dr Joseph George
1921 – 2012