

Lesser Crested Tern

Sterna bengalensis

Category A

Very rare vagrant

1 record

Breeds in Libya, the Red Sea area south to Somalia, the Persian Gulf east to India, Madagascar, the Maldives, New Guinea and Australia. One or two pairs have bred in some years in Spain and Italy. Libyan birds pass through the Straits of Gibraltar to winter in West Africa. Red Sea and Persian Gulf populations disperse south along African coast and east towards India.

There had been 9 British records up to the end of 2010, including a female which returned to the Farne Islands, Northumberland each summer between 1984 and 1997.

There are just two other Kent records, both of which are presumed to relate to the long-staying Northumberland bird – at Dungeness on 6th May 1989 and Pegwell Bay on 22nd August 1996.

The only area record is as follows:

1984 Copt Point, one, 17th September (R. Hollingsworth)

This record was originally submitted as a Royal Tern, and accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee as a Royal or Lesser Crested Tern. However the observer has since had field experience of Royal Tern and is certain of the identification as Lesser Crested Tern. It seems highly probable that this sighting relates to the long-staying Farne Islands individual seen in Kent on two subsequent occasions.