

**Lesser Crested Tern, *Sterna bengalensis*, a new Bird for Thailand**

The avifauna of Thailand is comparatively well-known through the endeavours of both foreign and native ornithologists. However, most attention has been devoted to landbirds while the status of many species of shorebird is much less well known. In particular, the islands and long coastlines of the peninsula have received especially sparse coverage, yet these areas may be of considerable importance for wintering waders, wintering and breeding terns and other shorebirds (MEDWAY & WELLS, 1976).

During the expedition of the Ecological Study Team from the Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (TISTR) to Ko Yao Yai, Phang-nga Province (latitude 7° 50' N; longitude 98° 35' E), a small collection of birds was made. Among 37 species obtained were five specimens of the Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, hitherto unrecorded from Thailand. They were shot after dark on Ko Khai, a group of islets south-west of Ko Yao Yai, on March 16, 1976. All specimens are deposited in the collection of the Ecological Research Division, TISTR. Their measurements are shown in Table 1.

The species breeds from the Mediterranean, around the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to Australasia and was previously known from Peninsular Malaysia as a non-breeding visitor to the west coast (MEDWAY & WELLS, 1976).

In the field *S. bengalensis* may be distinguished from the Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, a fairly common breeding bird off both peninsular coasts and the Gulf of Thailand (DEIGNAN, 1963), by its much lighter build, brighter orange-yellow (instead of greenish-yellow) bill and black forehead in breeding dress. Adults of the rare and little-known Chinese Crested Tern *S. zimmermanni*, known in Thailand from only three specimens (HALL, 1956) may be separated from both of these species by their black-tipped bills and much paler grey upperparts (KING *et al.*, 1975).

Table 1. Biometrics of Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis* collected on Ko Yao Yai, Phang-nga Province, 16 March 1976. Measurements given in mm.

Specimen number	Sex	Total length	Wing	Tail	Tarsus	Bill (to gape)	Weight (g)
CTNRC 53-4619	male	453	292	165	25	70	240
53-4620	„	370	295	112	25	75	300
53-4621	„	440	310	150	25	75	240
53-4622	female	385	290	112	25	75	240
53-4623	„	350	280	110	25	65	240

I thank Dr. Niphan Ratanaworaphan, Director, Ecological Research Division and Mrs. Porntip Angkapreechases for their help and encouragement. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Jarujin Nabhitabhata for help in identification of the specimens. I thank both him and Mr. Philip D. Round for their comments during the preparation of this manuscript. Finally, I should like to thank my colleagues on the collecting team : Mr. Supachai Sittilert, Songsak Yenbuthra, Preecha Leuthra, Pichai Chularerk and Preecha Noonpakdi.

## REFERENCES

- DEIGNAN, H.G. 1963. *Checklist of the Birds of Thailand*. United States National Museum, Bulletin 226. Washington, D.C.
- HALL, B.P. 1956. First record of the Chinese Crested Tern *Thalasseus zimmermanni* from Thailand. *Bull. British Orn. Club* 76 : 87.
- KING, B., E.C. DICKINSON and M.W. WOODCOCK. 1975. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins; London.
- MEDWAY, LORD and D.R. WELLS. 1976. *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula*. Witherby and Universiti Malaya, London and Kuala Lumpur.

*Nivesh Nadee*

Ecological Research Division  
Thailand Institute of Scientific and  
Technological Research  
Bangkhen, Bangkok 10900