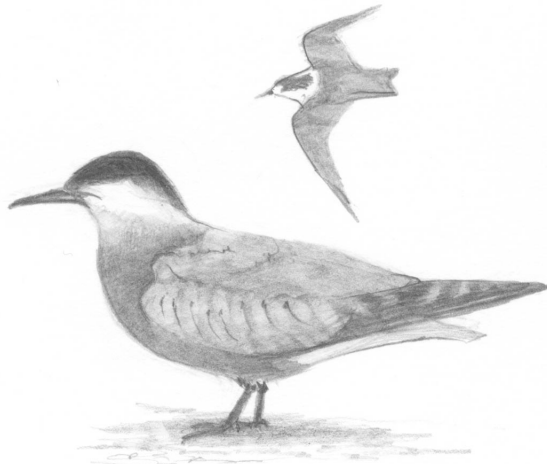


**TERNs IN OUR AREA – DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE? ... Mike and Kaye Traynor  
... Drawings Kaye Traynor**

There are three Tern species common in and around this part of the coast. Most people will be familiar with the Crested Terns, which are often seen with Silver Gulls, feeding and resting along the beaches and estuaries. They are recognisable by their graceful flight, typical black caps, and long, slender wings.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonia hybrida* Size: 25–27 cm; span 70 cm



Also called the Marsh Tern, this is the smallest of the Terns which occur in our area. They favour large inland swamps, lagoons and lakes, where they can be seen hovering above the water while feeding and catching insects. They also occasionally dive for food.

In breeding plumage, the Whiskered Tern has a dark red bill, red legs, and a black cap contrasting with a white cheek, hence the name “whiskered”.

Its non-breeding plumage has a black crown with white streaks, a white forehead, and black legs.

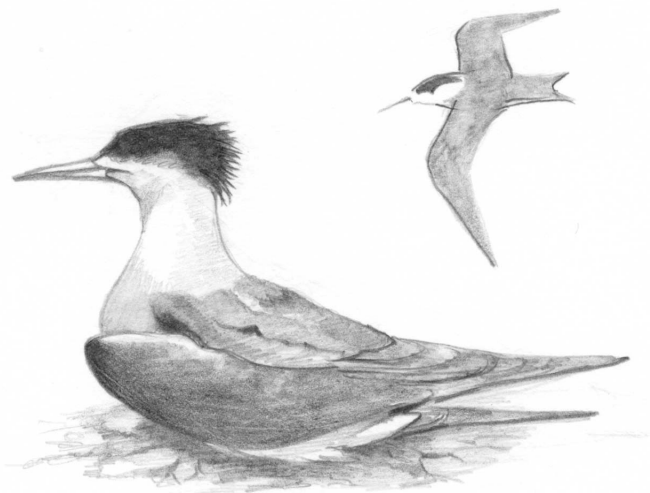
These terns form colonies for breeding during Spring and Summer, building fragile nests on the water using aquatic plants and grasses.

**Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii* Size: 44–48 cm; span 95 cm–1.05 m

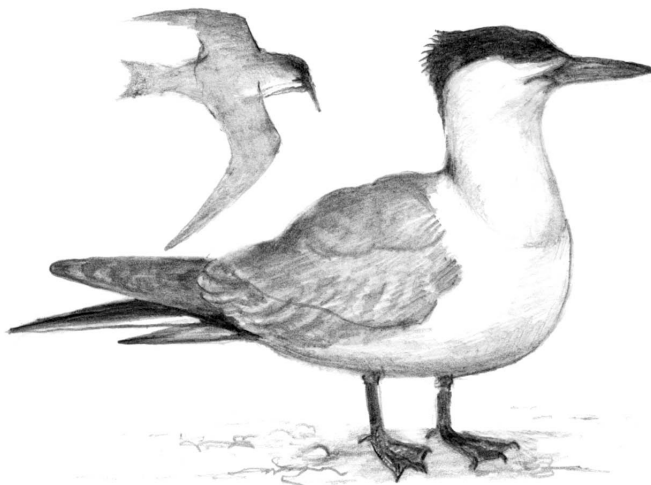
Crested Terns are often seen congregating in sizeable groups on the edge of the Anglesea River. They feed exclusively on fish taken on and near the surface, diving, and partly immersing themselves.

Second only in size to the Caspian Tern, the Crested Tern has a long, yellow bill, black legs, dark brown eyes, white underparts, grey back and tail and wings a darker grey. In breeding plumage, it has a shaggy black crest, whereas in non-breeding plumage, the crest is duller.

They nest in colonies on off-shore islands, September–December, and make a simple nest or scrape, usually laying only one egg.



**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Size: 48–55 cm; span 1.1–1.4 m



The Caspian Tern is largest of the Terns. Its strong, scarlet bill distinguishes it from other terns. Usually alone or in pairs, these birds are commonly seen on sea coasts, coastal lagoons and estuaries, but also occur far inland on larger lakes and rivers.

It dives for food – small to medium-sized fish taken in coastal areas and shallow freshwaters. It also takes the eggs and young of some shorebirds and landbirds.

In breeding plumage it has a black crown and forehead. During non-breeding the forehead is white and the crown has brownish streaks. Upper parts medium grey, underparts white, eye dark brown and black legs. Caspian Terns lay their eggs on the ground in sand or pebbles, and sometimes scoop a hollow in the centre of a plant such as Pig-face.

Reference: Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight. 2006, *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, 2006 8th edn, HarperCollinsPublishers.

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