

Roseate Tern

Sterna dougallii

STATUS

Endangered 

Endangered 

31



Roseate Tern with leg bands

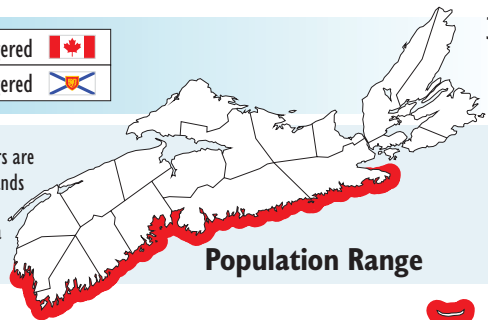
Species Description

The Roseate Tern is a small gull-like seabird (33-41 cm). Its long, thin bill is solid black in May, and turns to black with a red base as the summer progresses. It has a white body, black head, and deeply forked tail feathers. A pinkish tinge to the breast is sometimes observed. Adults have bright red legs, while chicks have black legs. Its call is a harsh skivick or zraaaach.



In flight, note the long split tail and dark bill.

Less than 60 breeding pairs are found on three coastal islands off NS. They winter along the coast of South America from Columbia to Brazil.



Population Range

Habitat

Breeds within colonies of Common and Arctic Terns on coastal islands in areas free of dense woody vegetation. Nests in areas sheltered by vegetation or other cover. Often selects nest shelter boxes if provided. Requires islands that are free of predators and close to shallow-water fishing sites with sandy bottoms, bars, or shoals.



Chick



Roseate Terns are typically observed with Common and Arctic Terns along the coast from May to September while migrating, roosting, and feeding.



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Interesting Points

- Catch fish by patrolling over the water and surface picking or plunge-diving. It travels up to 24 km to forage for fish.
- Can hybridize with Common and Arctic Terns.
- The name *roseate* comes from the pinkish hue sometimes observed on the breast.



Dark bill in June
(red at base as
summer progresses)

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Similar Species

Common Tern:

Similar size (31-38 cm); bill slightly shorter and orange with a black tip; mottled, grey body; adults and chicks have yellow or orange legs; less harsh call.



Arctic Tern:

Similar size (28-39 cm); shorter red bill; mottled or grey body; short orange legs; less harsh call. Chicks have orange or red legs.



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Threats to Survival

- Predation from birds (gulls, raptors, crows, ravens) and mammals (mink, fox).
- Human disturbance.
- Loss of coastal island habitat.
- Mortality during migration and on wintering grounds.



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How You Can Help

Avoid islands with seabird colonies from May to August (may be marked by signs with the bird symbol on the right). Keep your dog on a leash and remove all garbage and food when in coastal areas. Report sightings of tern colonies and submit photos of banded birds to Environment Canada.



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Stewardship and garbage clean-up



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Roseate tern monitoring

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.speciesatrisk.ca/roseatetern, www.ted.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447, www.reportband.gov, 1-800-327-BAND

Stewardship: Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation (902) 634-9977, rtrp@coastalaction.org