

## **Rockabill Tern Report 2007: Summary**

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**The conservation of Roseate Terns on Rockabill is a joint project of BirdWatch Ireland, National Parks & Wildlife Service (of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government) & the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is co-ordinated by BWI and NPWS and funded by NPWS and the RSPB**

- There was continuous wardening on Rockabill Island between 10 May and 7 August 2007.
- The first Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougallii*) and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) eggs were seen on the 19 May. In total, 820 Roseate, 1,411 Common and 209 Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) nests were found up to and including the cut off date (34 days after first eggs were seen). Mean clutch sizes for the three species were 1.76, 2.32, and 1.87 respectively.
- The productivity of Roseate Terns was 1.11 fledged chicks per nest was lower than the last seven years. Productivity of Common Terns was estimated to be 0.84 fledged chicks per nest and  $\leq 0.16$  for Arctic Terns.
- A total of 61 Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*) nests were recorded with a mean clutch of 1.79. Productivity of Black Guillemot was estimated to be 0.85 fledged chicks per nest with eggs. Forty eight chicks were ringed. Also, 196 Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) nests were recorded with a mean clutch of 1.87. The productivity of Kittiwake was estimated to be 0.35 fledged chicks per nest with eggs.
- Totals of 842 Roseate, 1,039 Common and 33 Arctic Tern chicks were ringed. The ringing total for each species was lower than previous years. Two adult Roseate Terns and five Common Terns were also ringed.
- Disturbances were logged and totalled 12 hours and 18 minutes over the 3 month season. Much of this was relatively benign and principally caused adult terns to dread. Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) were present in 2007 during the wardening period. Observations and evidence of predation were recorded (one adult and five Common Tern chicks, four Kittiwake chicks). Botulism was not recorded in terns to any significant extent.
- An estimated 63.03% of adult Roseate Terns had both BTO and Roseate special rings, 5.83% had special rings only, 5.32% bore BTO rings only and 26.27% were unringed. The rings of 700 Roseate Terns were read, with four year old birds comprising the largest cohort (14.13%). All Roseate Terns positively identified originated in Ireland or the UK, with the majority ringed on Rockabill (92.43%). Forty two rings still need to be traced. Out of 1,238 Common Terns sighted loafing in various areas of the colony, 66.50% were unringed while 33.40% carried BTO rings. The largest cohort comprised four year old birds (21.21%), although ten rings still need to be traced.
- Clupeids were the most common prey item (c.74%) presented to chicks by both Roseate and Common Terns. Gadoids and Sandeels were a minor component of diet in both species, mainly during the early chick-rearing period.
- The chick-feeding rate of Roseate terns peaked in the afternoon/evening (14:00-20:00).
- Tern foraging activity occurred in all directional sectors around Rockabill. 54% of Roseate and Common Tern foraging occurred to the north, northeast and east of Rockabill. When seen foraging in association with other seabird species (35.60% of all observations), auks were the most frequently present group (57.24% of all observations) followed by Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) (17.11%), and *Larus* gulls (12.50%).

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