



Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*)

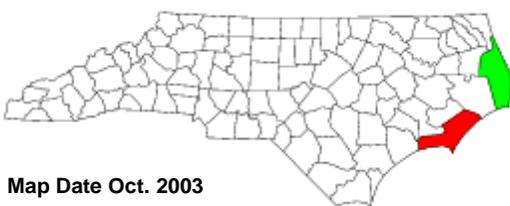


Courtesy Bud Oliverira - USFWS

Roseate Tern's on the Coast of North Carolina (photo by Bud Oliverira)

compete with Common terns for both food (small fish caught by plunge-diving) and nesting sites, Roseate terns benefit from the aggressive "colony-site defense" behavior of the Common terns. In contrast with Common terns which usually nest in open or exposed sites, Roseate terns usually hide their nests under some sort of protective cover such as rocks, vegetation, or washed-up debris.

Habitat: Roseate terns breed primarily on small offshore islands, rocks, cays, and islets. Rarely do they breed on large islands. They have been reported nesting near vegetation or jagged rock, on open sandy beaches, close to the waterline on narrow ledges of emerging rocks, or among coral rubble. Roseate terns are occasional visitors along the Outerbanks, south of Cape Hatteras, particularly at Cape Point within Cape Hatteras National Seashore, during the months of July and August. They may be seen late spring and early summer on a rare occasion.



Map Date Oct. 2003

Distribution and Range: Roseate terns are occasional visitors along the Outerbanks, south of Cape Hatteras, particularly at Cape Point within Cape Hatteras National Seashore, during the months of July and August. They may be seen late spring and early summer on a rare occasion. Species may occur in similar habitats in other counties.

■ Observed more than 20 years

■ Observed within 20 years.

Listing: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) placed the Roseate tern on the list of threatened and endangered species in 1987. The North American subspecies of the Roseate tern is divided into two breeding populations, one in the northeastern U.S. and Nova Scotia (listed as endangered), and one in the southeastern United States and Caribbean (listed as threatened). These breeding populations winter in South America. During migration Roseate terns are found, and can be confused with, the Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and the Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*).

Threats: Threats to Roseate tern populations include vegetational changes on the breeding areas, competition with gulls for suitable nesting areas, and predation. Predators such as raccoons find tern nests when they are attracted to the garbage left behind by beach users. Also, extreme weather events and pollution can affect the tern on its wintering grounds.

Management and Protection: Management of breeding habitat (manipulating vegetation, providing artificial nest sites, and promoting nesting at former colony sites) may be necessary to increase tern reproductive success, particularly when coupled with predator control programs (scaring, trapping, relocation, or removal of predators).

Why Protect the Roseate Tern: Extinction is a natural process. Normally, new species develop through a process known as speciation at about the same rate they go extinct. However, because of air and water pollution, over-hunting, extensive deforestation, the loss of wetlands, and other human-impacts, extinctions are now occurring at a rate that far exceeds speciation. These actions are reducing the biodiversity on Earth.

What You Can Do to Help Protect the Roseate tern:

- Avoid disturbing any seabird colony
- Do not leave or bury trash or scraps of food on beaches -- food attracts predators.
- Report a roseate tern sighting to the point of contact listed below.

