

Terns

Terns are small, slender seabirds with long, pointed wings and straight pointed bills; plunge dive for fish or skim fish from surface; generally lay eggs in shallow depression in vegetation or cobble; migrate south for winter. Over 90% of terns in Maine nest on <10 islands where resource agencies control predators and manage nesting habitat. Common and roseate terns winter along coast of Brazil and Argentina, while Arctic terns have the longest known migration of any species (average of 41,300 miles), wintering in the Antarctic.



Common Tern (left): gray back; wings are gray above lighter below, with dark tip; white belly; black cap; reddish/orange bill with black tip; in flight their wings appear centered on the body

Arctic Tern (right): Maine threatened species; gray back; wings look white from below with small dark tips; black cap; short red bill; in flight their wings appear close to the head



Roseate Tern: US and Maine endangered species; gray body; pale gray, slender wings; black cap; their bill is mostly black

Seabirds spend the majority of their lives at sea, returning to coastal islands each spring to nest and raise their young. Sand and gravel beaches, grassy meadows and shrubs, and boulder-covered shorelines support at least 12 species of seabirds. These birds need nesting islands that are free from predators and human disturbance. A single disturbance to a nesting colony can cause the loss of eggs, chicks, or permanent desertion of the nesting colony.

Conservation agencies have worked for over 30 years to restore Arctic, common, and roseate terns, Atlantic puffin, and razorbills to Maine islands. Several of these species have been restored to historic breeding islands and now occur in higher numbers than previously recorded. Unfortunately, the birds are highly concentrated on 5-10 islands and remain vulnerable to predation, disease events, and oil spills.

Species	Maine population	# Breeding Colonies
Arctic Tern	2,120	7
Common Tern	8,650	14
Roseate Tern	245	3-5
Atlantic Puffin	1,100	5
Razorbill	750 (estimate)	6
Black Guillemot	12,000 adults	166
Great Black-backed Gull	7,000	183
Herring Gull	21,500	180
Laughing Gull	2,360	3
Common Eider	21,000	320
Double-crested Cormorant	9,500	81
Great Cormorant	38	3

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Seabirds of the Maine Coast



Alcids

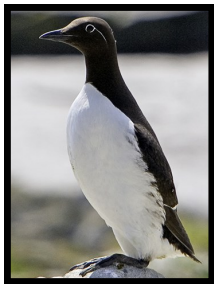
With the exception of the breeding season, alcids remain on the water and spend winters on open ocean; they use wings to propel themselves underwater in pursuit of herring, hake, and sand lance; reach southern limit of breeding distribution in Maine; nest under rocks or boulders, often observed sitting on the water



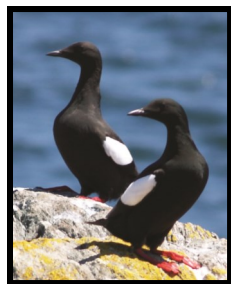
Atlantic Puffin (above left): black wings with white belly; white face, triangular, orange-tipped bill



Razorbill (above right): black back, head, and upper wings; white body; deep bill with white vertical line on adult



Common Murre (above left): brownish/black back, head, and upper wings; white body; long, thin bill; rarest of Maine's alcids; recently confirmed nesting in Maine for the first time in over 100 years



Black Guillemot (above right): black body with bold white patches on wings; immature and birds in winter plumage are pale gray or whitish

Gulls

Gulls may gather in large groups where food is abundant; will forage on wide variety of prey that they capture or scavenge; can be very vocal; and are common along entire coastline of Maine. Great black-backed gulls nest on bare rock and cobble, while herring gulls will also nest in vegetation. Within Maine, laughing gull nest in dense vegetation on 3 managed tern colonies.



Great Black-backed Gull:

largest gull in Maine, black back and wings, white belly and head, yellow bill, present in Maine year-round



Herring Gull:

gray body, white belly and head, wing tips are black, yellow bill, present in Maine year-round

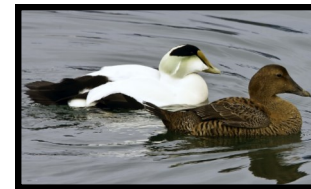


Laughing Gull:

gray back, black head, white belly, red bill, winters along coast of southeastern US

Common Eiders

Common eiders are sea ducks that nest on coastal islands, often in mixed colonies with gulls and cormorants. They are the largest sea duck and have a wedge-shaped head and long bill, broad wings, and a heavy body. Female eiders build their down-filled nests in areas of tall, dense vegetation. Eiders are very sensitive to disturbance, and if an eider leaves her eggs or ducklings unprotected, they can quickly be eaten by gulls.



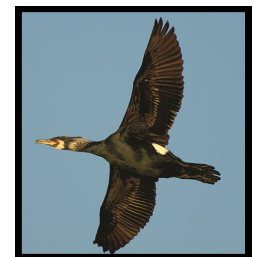
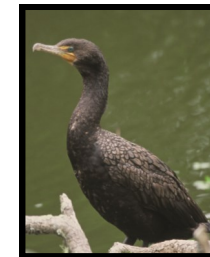
Male & Female Common Eider: male has yellow bill, black cap, white back and chest with black belly. Female is mottled brown.

Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant (below left):

dark brownish/black; orange chin; can be observed perched while holding their wings out to their side. Spend winter months in southeastern United States.

Great Cormorant (below right): dark brownish/black, white throat patch, white hip patch. Can be observed year-round in Maine



Although double-crested cormorants can build their nests in trees, they generally build their large stick nests on the ground. Both species are very sensitive to disturbance and will leave eggs and chicks vulnerable to predation if they are disturbed. Predation by Bald Eagles may be limiting the number of breeding pairs for both species of cormorants.