

## Rosy year for Roseates

As the Roseate Tern Project marks its thirtieth year, the colony at Rockabill celebrates its highest ever numbers and above-average productivity, as **Stephen Newton** reports.

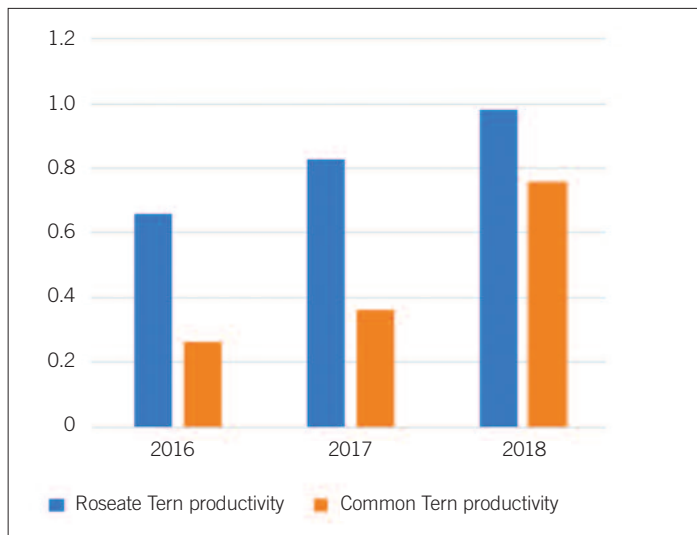
As you will have read earlier in the magazine, BirdWatch Ireland is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and, coincidentally, the Rockabill team were working away to try to make sure that the 30<sup>th</sup> year of conservation action for Roseate Terns was also one to remember.

In the last issue of *Wings* we reported that Roseate, Common and Arctic Tern numbers were close to, and probably slightly higher than, last year's counts.

Now that the data has been input, tallied and checked, we are pleased to report a slight increase for all species: 1,642 pairs of Roseate Terns, 2,039 pairs of Common Terns and 59 pairs of Arctic Terns.

However, breeding numbers (or the head count) are only one half of the equation: it is the number of young fledged per pair that really counts.

The graph below shows the



Productivity (number of young fledged per breeding pair) of Roseate and Common Terns on Rockabill, Co Dublin, in the last three seasons.



This year's Rockabill team (from left): Luíse Ní Dhonnabháin, Stephen Newton, Heidi Acampora and David Miley. Photo: Mark Robins

trend for the last three years, and the increased productivity is worth celebrating. 2016 and 2017 were very poor years for the terns, but thankfully, the beautiful spell of weather in late June and July this year, coupled with an abundance of sprats and sandeels, made the difference and left us feeling much more upbeat.

Yes, we had a lot of trouble with marauding Great Black-backed Gulls, but in the end each pair of Roseate Terns fledged one young, and the Common Terns were not far behind.

How did the season end for the other two key Roseate Tern colonies in the EU-funded LIFE project? The colony at Lady's Island Lake, Co Wexford, was troubled by a Pine Marten and an American Mink over the season, but it recovered well for 213 pairs to rear 223 young, a productivity of 1.05.

The RSPB's flagship Roseate Tern colony at Coquet Island, Northumberland, had a record 118 pairs and a productivity of 0.92. All in all, a very good year for the north-west European population of Roseates ■



An Roinn  
Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of  
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

EU LIFE Nature project 'LIFE14NAT/UK/000394' is supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service

Roseate Terns on Rockabill, Co Dublin  
Photo: Brian Burke

