

Another record-breaking year for terns



It was another record-breaking year for Roseate Terns on Rockabill, their island colony off north Co Dublin. It is Europe's largest colony of this rare species.

Common Tern numbers decreased slightly at the same site, while Arctic Terns were up a little.

I was glad to see that the Black Guillemots at Rockabill were showing signs of recovery from the storms of the winter before last.

And we set a new record for Kittiwakes there after a bit of a crash two years ago.

Dublin Port supported a colony of around 500 pairs of Common Terns and 60 pairs of Arctic Terns, which is fantastic, especially in such a busy area.

Meanwhile at Kilcoole, in Co Wicklow, there was a staggering 180 Little Tern nesting attempts this season, although spring tides in early July washed some of these away.

Meanwhile, the Little Terns at Baltray, Co Louth, were very slow to settle and, when egg-laying commenced, the eggs were being picked off by crows. It seems many of these pairs abandoned and moved to Kilcoole. However, about 10-15 pairs persisted at Baltray and at the time of writing we had ringed 16 chicks.

Stephen Newton, BirdWatch Ireland's Senior Conservation Officer (Seabirds)

The tern report

Wardened and monitored by BirdWatch Ireland, our east coast tern colonies continue to thrive



Rockabill wardens Brian Burke (left) and Andrew Power.

Rockabill, Co Dublin

Wardening team: Brian Burke, Andrew Power and a small but keen team of volunteers and ringers

It was a record-breaking year for **Roseate Terns** at Rockabill, with 1,388 nests. **Common Tern** numbers decreased slightly to 1,945 nests, while **Arctic Terns** were up to around 50 nests, but were then set back by gull predation.

Black Guillemots are showing signs of recovery from the storms of the winter before last

– they had 60 nests this year – and a new record was set for **Kittiwakes** after a bit of a crash two years ago: 215 full nests of which 193 had eggs at the time of our census.

We have been busy ringing chicks on Rockabill and, on July 11th, set a new record for the number of tern chicks ringed in a day – at least 1,400 by our team of nine ringers!

In addition, we hosted a BBC cameraman, who filmed a sequence for *Springwatch*, and

TV3 filmed an episode of *Ireland's Animal Rescue* about the island, its terns and those who look after them. This will be screened later in the year.

Kilcoole, Co Wicklow

Wardening team: Susan Doyle, Cole Macey, Paddy Manley and Jerry Wray, assisted by Niall Keogh and a host of volunteers

Our first nest at this **Little Tern** colony was found on May 21st and the first young hatched on June 12th. To date, 289 chicks have successfully hatched, and

the majority have been ringed.

When they are about 10 days old we add a second ring, engraved and coloured (**see photo**), to follow their life histories without the need to recapture them.

In total, we had about 180 nesting attempts this season, by about 150 pairs – a record year – but spring tides in early July washed some away.

The first fledgling was noted on July 4th – it had just been colour-ringed and took us by surprise by flying away!



Roseate Tern on Rockabill this summer. Photo: Brian Burke



Arctic Tern on Rockabill this summer. Photo: Brian Burke

Baltray, Co Louth

Wardening team: Amélie Boué, Andrew O'Donoghue, Tony Glass, James Wilton and Will Connell, assisted by Maurice Connaghy, Dominic Hartigan and volunteers

We experienced a frustrating season at Baltray. The **Little Terns** were slow to settle and, when egg-laying commenced, eggs were being picked off by Rooks and other crows despite our attempts to scare them off.

It looks like many of these pairs moved to Kilcoole, swelling numbers to record highs there. This was demonstrated by a very distinctive, leucistic (white) adult being recorded at both sites.

However, about 10-15 pairs persisted and at time of writing we had ringed 16 chicks.

Dublin Port

Team: Niall Tierney, Ricky Whelan, Jen Lynch and Steve Newton, assisted by Niall Harney of NPWS

We continued our monitoring of the **Common Terns** and **Arctic Terns** that nest on two mooring 'dolphins' established in Dublin

Port by the late Oscar Merne. These support around 500 pairs of Common Terns and 60 pairs of Arctic Terns.

In addition, Dublin Port Company has deployed **two new nesting platforms**, one in the Tolka estuary off Clontarf and one off the Great South Wall. These are being colonised steadily as the populations may have been close to capacity on the original structures.

Both species are using the new sites and at the time of writing we had about 60-70 pairs in the Tolka and 24 pairs off the South Wall.

We initiated a chick colour-ringing scheme to monitor the movements of terns between the various structures, though we will have to wait a couple of years before this year's chicks are recruited to the Dublin Bay breeding population.

➔ We thank NPWS, Dublin Port Company, Skerries Sea Tours, Louth Nature Trust and the Heritage Council for support and funding for these projects.



Colour-ringed Little Tern chick at Kilcoole. Photo: S Doyle

Inishbofin Birdwatching Breaks 2015

with Anthony McGeehan



Dolphin Hotel

NOTE
Also available for private group bookings all summer

September Birdwatching

New Weekend 18th-20th September
2 B&B, 2 Dinners, 1 Packed Lunch €269pps

Few Irish birds are truly resident, and southbound migrants are very much in vogue when September comes. The roll-call includes landbirds, shorebirds and seabirds. The island outpost of Inishbofin is a stopping place that intercepts species travelling from near and far. This weekend break is designed to coincide with the widest range of autumn migrants.



Autumn Bird Treasure Hunt

9-13th October 4 B&B, 4 Dinners, 2 Packed Lunches €419pps

Anthony has a track record of finding rarities on Inishbofin. Join him on this rare bird treasure hunt.

Dolphin Hotel,
Inishbofin, Co Galway
www.dolphinhotel.ie
info@dolphinhotel.ie
tel 095 45991



I-WeBS count dates



The recommended dates for the 2015/16 I-WeBS count season are presented here and have been chosen based on tidal conditions. If the suggested weekend is not workable, please select the next most appropriate date and try to coordinate with any nearby sites, where relevant. If you have

any queries, please contact us at iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie.

I-WeBS counters will soon receive their newsletter and any additional information about the season ahead.

East Coast & Inland Counties			South & West Coast Counties	
	Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Dublin*	Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Cork**
Sep	12 th -13 th	12:38	19 th -20 th	10:37
Oct	10 th -11 th	11:35	17 th -18 th	09:28
Nov	14 th -15 th	13:31	21 st -22 nd	14:20
Dec	12 th -13 th	12:36	19 th -20 th	12:42
Jan	9 th -10 th	11:40	16 th -17 th	11:07
Feb	20 th -21 st	10:50	27 th -28 th	08:55
Mar	12 th -13 th	14:44	19 th -20 th	16:02

*Based on the Sunday high-tide time at Dublin Port.

**Based on the Sunday high-tide time at Cork Harbour.