



Job Vacancies:

Seabird Surveyor & Tern Wardening Roles – Summer 2026

Background

BirdWatch Ireland is Ireland's largest conservation charity concerned with the protection of birds and biodiversity. A key part of our conservation work over many decades has been the protection and monitoring of nesting seabirds at a number of sites. Seabirds are important indicators of the health of our marine environment and so it is important that they are monitored for changes in populations, and that efforts are made to protect them and address pressures and threats that may impact their breeding success.

In recent decades, BirdWatch Ireland, largely funded by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), local authorities and EU funds such as LIFE and Interreg, has carried out detailed censuses of seabird islands, particularly those on the east coast. Similarly, largely under contract to NPWS and with the support of Dublin Port and County Councils, the protection and monitoring of nesting terns has long been a focus for BirdWatch Ireland at a number of east coast colonies and we have achieved great success in the conservation of species like Roseate, Common and Little Tern, in cooperation with NPWS and other bodies.

We are seeking to recruit for a number of seabird monitoring and tern wardening positions this summer, subject to successful funding applications and tender bids. An overview of each role is provided below.

Rockabill Island Tern Warden

'Rockabill' is situated around 7km off the coast of Skerries in north Dublin and consists of two small islands. The larger of the two hosts a lighthouse and associated buildings and gardens and is home to the largest Roseate Tern colony in Europe, as well as hundreds of pairs of nesting Common Terns, tens of pairs of Arctic Terns, a Kittiwake colony on the cliffs and a significant number of breeding Black Guillemots. Generally under contract to NPWS, BirdWatch Ireland have been employing wardens to protect and monitor the breeding

Terns on Rockabill since the late 1980's and over that time have seen the Roseate Tern population increase to over 10 times its size in 1989. There has been a similar increase in the Common Tern population, though it recently decreased again due to avian flu amongst other pressures.

We hope to employ a small team of wardens with assistance from BirdWatch Ireland staff and volunteers during key stages of the season. Wardens will be largely resident on the island from late April to early August, with basic facilities including gas cooker and limited electricity. The role of the wardens involves removal of vegetation, deployment of nestboxes, ring-reading, daily nest checks and data collection throughout the season of clutch sizes, hatching success, ringing and taking biometric measurements of chicks, and writing an end of season report.

Kilcoole Little Tern Warden

Kilcoole beach in north Wicklow is the site of the largest Little Tern colony in Ireland, with 285 pairs nesting there in 2024, comprising over half the Irish population. Conservation of Little Terns at Kilcoole has been carried out since the mid-1980's by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and BirdWatch Ireland. In recent years there has been 24/7 protection of the colony, with wardens during the day tasked with preventing disturbance, locating and monitoring nests, ring-reading and deterring predators. Night wardens are responsible for predator control. This system of protection has been hugely successful in recent years and ringing efforts have shown that many Kilcoole birds have gone on to nest at other important Irish colonies, meaning the benefits have been felt at population level.

Day wardens begin set-up of the colony, including multiple layers of protective fencing, information signs and a large viewing hide, in late April. Once the first eggs are laid, they are observed on a daily basis throughout the season to monitor their progress and quickly identify any losses to predators. Hatching success is recorded and chicks are ringed for future identification. A variety of predators can threaten the colony and wardens must ensure a high level of vigilance to identify any threats or predation incidents. As well as the Little Terns, wardens monitor the breeding success of nesting Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher. Following the breeding season, data is compiled, and a detailed end of season report is written.

Portrane Little Tern Warden

Little Terns have attempted to breed at Portrane for many years, but only achieved success after huge efforts by the BirdWatch Ireland Fingal Branch since 2018. Their efforts were completely voluntary, with support from Fingal CoCo and NPWS for fencing materials and contractors. As a result of these efforts and constant protection the colony has risen to 46 pairs making it one of the most important sites in the country, with high breeding success in recent years. This year we hope to be in a position to hire two wardens to work with the local volunteers from BirdWatch Ireland Fingal Branch, funders including Fingal CoCo and NPWS, and other local stakeholders to continue this success and support, protect and monitor the colony.

Cliff-nesting Seabird Surveyors

We anticipate requiring a small team surveyors to census cliff-nesting and colonial seabirds on the east coast, including both offshore islands and mainland cliffs. Surveyors will be based on the mainland and required to travel to these sites on a daily basis to carry out census and productivity counts using binoculars, scopes and a drone according to standardised methodology to ensure data gathered is comparable with previous years. Surveyors will have to strictly abide by safe operating procedures at all times. An end-of-season report will be written, compiling results from the 2026 season and putting it into context with results from 2024 and 2025, as well as wider national and international trends.

Ireland's Eye Warden

As part of the Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan, and Ireland's Eye Management Plan, Fingal CoCo and NPWS funded two BirdWatch Ireland wardens for Ireland's Eye last summer. This was done with the close cooperation of Howth Castle/Tetrarch. The issue of human disturbance to breeding seabirds on the island has long been identified as a problem, and wardening together with signage, mowed paths and fencing have helped to protect the nesting seabirds by keeping visitors at a safe distance and thus striking a balance between people and seabirds on the island. Wardens were tasked with monitoring footfall and people distribution on the island, explaining the restrictions and discussing the nesting seabirds with the visitors, and monitoring the birds themselves. We hope to be in a position to repeat this work in 2026. Note that the priority period for wardening is weekends and bank holidays, when the largest numbers of visitors come to Ireland's Eye, and so wardens will be expected to work these days as a priority.

Duration

The start and end times of each position will vary, but most will run from late April to mid-August and possibly later.

Pay

Salary will vary slightly according to each position and will be determined following confirmation of funding.

Requirements

The skills outlined below are desirable and the applicants should tailor their application forms to highlight their experience in these areas:

	Rockabill	Little Tern Warden	Seabird Surveyor	Ireland's Eye Warden
A degree in zoology or related discipline, or previous proven experience working on conservation projects.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ability to compile data, analyse results and write reports.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Previous experience working at seabird colonies.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Experience working in a close-knit team.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Awareness of the conservation issues relating to Roseate and Common Terns, Little Terns and other seabird species.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Experience carrying out bird or wildlife surveys according to standardised methodology.	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bird ringing or bird handling experience	Y	Y		
Experience working safely on cliff-tops.	Y		Y	Y
Experience working/living in remote locations.	Y		Y	Y
Ability to erect and maintain electric fencing		Y		
Any additional outdoor qualifications e.g. climbing, powerboating, mountaineering, First Aid etc.	Y	Y	Y	Y

How to Apply

[Please download and complete a BirdWatch Ireland application form here.](#)

Closing date for applications: Sunday 22nd March 2026.

Applications, or queries, can be emailed to recruitment@birdwatchireland.ie

Please note that we have also advertised a Seabird Conservation Officer position for 2026, subject to funding, and this requires a separate application form.