

USACE Natural Resource Management

Migratory Birds



Roseate Tern

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: The Roseate Tern is listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered when found along the Atlantic Coast from Maine south to North Carolina. Wherever else found, it is listed as threatened.

According to Cornell's Birds of the World, this species has been declining for more than a century as habitat has been lost to human activity and development as well as erosion, possibly from rising sea levels. USFWS notes that Roseate Terns are highly sensitive to disturbance and will desert entire colonies if they feel threatened. Predation and competition from increased large gull populations have also had a negative impact on Roseate Terns.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Recovery plans have been formulated by the USFWS for the northeastern population as well as the Caribbean population. Most of the northeastern population's colonies are intensely managed while the Caribbean breeding colonies are only lightly managed. Management primarily consists of predator control and vegetation control. There is very little to no management at non-breeding locations. Nest boxes and artificial nest sites such as tires and elevated boards are readily used by Roseate Terns.

HABITAT NEEDS: Roseate Terns are predominantly found in the tropics and subtropics, but some populations migrate to nest in temperate habitats found in North America.

- In eastern North America, the Roseate Tern is known to nest on sandy barrier islands or rocky islands. Occasionally this bird has been found nesting in hummocks of saltmarshes. Nests are usually placed near low vegetation, rocks, or shells for concealment.
- Roseate Terns forage in ocean waters from the coastline to deep waters. Colonies are typically located near productive foraging habitat such as tidal rips, shoals, and/or sandbars.

Height: This is a medium size bird that grows to approximately 13-16.1 inches in length. Adults weigh between 3.2-4.9 oz. (*All About Birds, Cornell*)

Color: Breeding adults are predominantly an off-white. They have a black cap, a blackish bill, red legs, gray upper wings with black outer primaries, and faint, rosy underparts. Non-breeding adults have a white forehead and generally lack the rosy tones on their breast. Juveniles are gray, but have a scale-like appearance from above due to broad, dark-gray tips on feathers. (*USFWS*)

Photo Credit: Saliva Jorge E, USFWS

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

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USACE ROLE: Under section 204 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992, the USACE is granted the authority to plan, design, and build projects which protect, restore, and create aquatic and ecologically related habitats in connection with dredging of authorized Federal navigation projects. Generally, such projects involve the beneficial use of dredged material from navigation channels to improve or create wetlands for waterbird nesting habitats. Under this authority, the USACE New England District has entered into multiple Project Partnership Agreements that have restored nesting habitat for Roseate Terns as well as other waterbirds and shorebirds.

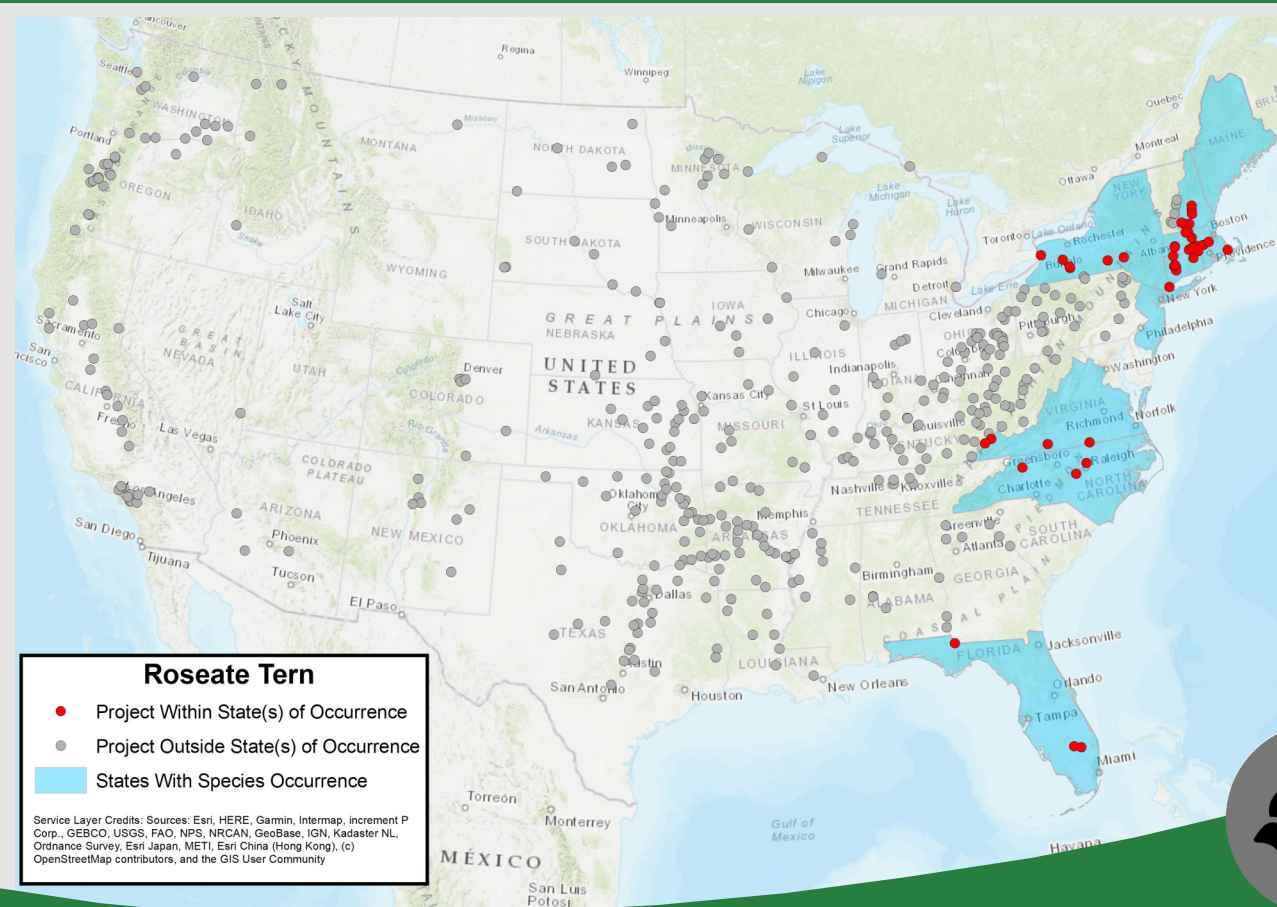
WHAT IS USACE DOING:

1 Past: The USACE partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game in 2006 to restore Bird Island located in Buzzards Bay in Marion, Massachusetts. This island provides critical nesting habitat for roseate and common terns. Though it is only one island of many in the Buzzards Bay and Nantucket Sound, because of increasing gull populations from 1920-1972, many tern nesting island became overrun with gulls. This resulted in Bird Island supporting over 20% of the northeastern Roseate Tern population!



Drone photo of Bird Island during restoration. VIRIN: 160226-A-ME637-001.JPG

Unfortunately, the approximately 3 acre island was surrounded by a dilapidated revetment which was allowing wave action to erode the shoreline. This erosion lowered the ground elevation, changed it from sand to gravel, and resulted in degraded habitat for tern nesting. The USACE set out to restore the revetment in order to reduce or eliminate erosion of nesting substrate and to restore suitable nesting substrate and vegetation. The original project was expected to be completed in 2015. However, in 2015, an additional \$3.1 million dollar contract to continue reconstructing the island via contract. The project ultimately finished in July of 2017.



Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources

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