



Steve T. Chmura
Commissioner

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Recreational Vehicles
100 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02202

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tern Workshop Participants

FR: B. G. Blodget, Assistant Director, NG & ES

DA: November 2, 1981

RE: 1981 tern census and inventory data

The number of pairs of Common Terns, after rising slowly for the past two years, headed sharply lower in 1981, declining 1,674 pairs (23%) from 1980 to 5,625 pairs. This was the lowest since 1978, when 4,119+ pairs were recorded. This decline is believed to be principally attributable to the breakup of the Monomoy colony, exacerbated by the virtual absence of vacant habitat elsewhere in the Commonwealth. The Monomoy colony sustained continued habitat loss due mainly to erosion of the island itself and unrelenting pressure from the adjacent Herring and Great Black-backed Gull colony. Although probably not as severe a factor as the foregoing, observers questioned for the first time whether growth and expansion of the Laughing Gull population (embedded within the tern colony), which reached 1,000 pairs in 1981, might not actually be starting to emerge as a negative factor. In addition, Great Horned Owl and Black-crowned Night Heron predation became more severe in 1981, leading to repeated night desertions.

The remaining species declined insignificantly. Least Terns fell to 1,856+ pairs, down from 2,040+ pairs in 1980. Roseate Terns were off about one percent from 1980 to 1,851 pairs. Arctic Terns dropped for the third year in a row, reaching 31 pairs, the same as in 1977.

During the prime census period of June 1-20, Least Terns were known to be breeding at 38 stations compared to 40 in 1980. Common Terns were found at only 18 (v. 23), Roseates at five (v. nine) and Arctics at six (v. seven).

Roseate Terns for the most part abandoned Monomoy Island in 1981 with only 35 pairs remaining (v. 400 pairs in 1980). However, this loss seemed to be mostly balanced-out by increases at Bird Island (up 100 from 1980) and Dead Neck-Sampson's Island (190 pairs v. none in 1980). Ninety-one percent of the Roseate Tern population continued to be dangerously concentrated at the latter two stations with 1,500 and 190 pairs respectively.

The largest concentration of Common Terns was at Monomoy where there were 1,995 pairs recorded (35 percent of the population). Seventy-five percent of the population was concentrated in five colonies larger than 500 pairs. In addition to Monomoy, these were Gray's Beach (860 pairs), Bird Island (600 pairs), Plymouth Beach (550 pairs) and New Island (520 pairs). There were only three Least Tern colonies reported numbering over 100 pairs in 1981 (v. six in 1980), but this included an enormous colony at Nauset Heights, Orleans (415 pairs v. 180 pairs there in 1980). The other two were West Dennis Beach (180 pairs v. 75 in 1980) and Coskata-Coatue (121 pairs v. 89 in 1980).

MASSACHUSETTS TERN INVENTORY
1981

The following data are representative of the period June 1-20, 1981 except where noted otherwise. The abbreviation "P" indicates that birds were known to have been present but census data are unavailable for the location. All numbers represent pairs.

No.	Colony	Least	Common	Roseate	Arctic
1	Woodbridge I., Newburyport		150		
2	Crane's Beach, Ipswich	40			
3a	Plum Island Marsh		97		
3b	Plum Island Refuge	80			
4	Plum Island State Park, Ipswich				
5	Milk Island, Rockport				
6	Tinker's Island, Salem		115		
7	Snake Island, Winthrop	1			
8	Hog Island, Hull		130		
9	Third Cliff, Scituate	P			
10	Fourth Cliff, Scituate	70			
11	Duxbury Beach, Duxbury	40			
12	Plymouth Beach, Plymouth	3	550	5	13
13	Bird Island, Marion		600	1,500	
14	Ram Island, Mattapoisett				
15	Fairhaven area				
16a	Barney's Joy, Dartmouth	30			
16b	Salter's Point, Dartmouth				
16c	Gooseberry Neck, Dartmouth				
17a	South Cape Beach, Mashpee				
17b	Washburn Island, Falmouth ¹	80			
17c	Popponesset Beach, Mashpee				
18	Old Harbor Beach, N. Sandwich	90			
19	Scorton Creek, Sandwich	1			
20	Dead Neck-Sampson's I., Barnstable	65	160	190	
21a	Craigville Beach, Barnstable				
21b	Long Beach, Barnstable	20	30		
22	Kalmus Beach, Barnstable	10			
23	Sandy Neck, Barnstable				
24	Gray's Beach, W. Yarmouth		860	45	
25	West Dennis Beach, Dennis	180	260		
26	Monomoy Wilderness, Chatham ²	45+	1,995	35	6
27a	Harding's Beach, Chatham				
27b	Harding's Beach Point, Chatham	2			
27c	North Beach, Chatham	P			
28a	Nauset Heights, Orleans	415	2		7
28b	Nauset Spit, Eastham	81			3
29	New Island, Eastham & Orleans		520		
30	Marconi Station, Wellfleet	30			

¹ includes 5 pairs at Sippewissett, Falmouth

² also contained an estimated 1,000 pairs of Laughing Gull

No.	Colony	Least	Common	Roseate	Arctic
(cont.)					
31a	Jeremy Point, Wellfleet				
31b	Great Island, Wellfleet	15			
32	Pamet, Truro				
33a	High Head, Truro ³	54			
33b	Exit 9, Provincetown	26			
33c	Mallicoat's, Provincetown	1			
33d	Race Point East, Provincetown	11			
33e	Race Point C. G. Sta., P'town				
33f	Race Point Light, Provincetown	30			1
34	Wood End Light, Provincetown	21	34		
35	Long Point, Provincetown				
36a	Nashawena Island, Gosnold	25	50		
36b	Penikese Island, Gosnold				
36c	Cuttyhunk Island, Gosnold	6			
37	Noman's Land, Chilmark, M. V.				
38a	Nantucket Wildlife Refuge				
38b	Coskata-Coatue W. R., Nantucket	121	1		
38c	Coatue Wildlife Ref., Nantucket				
39	Quidnet, Nantucket				1
40a	Siasconset, Nantucket	81			
40b	Cisco Beach, Nantucket				
40c	Eel Point, Nantucket				
40d	Quaise Point, Nantucket				
40e	Tom Never's Head, Nantucket				
40f	Surfside, Nantucket	12			
40g	Nantucket (other)				
41a	Tuckernuck I., Nantucket ⁴	25			
41b	Muskeget Isl., Nantucket		1		
42	Chappaquidick Isl., M.V.				
43	Tashmoo Spit, M.V.	30			
44	Cape Pogue W.R., M.V.	90	70		
45	Sarson's Inlet area, M.V.				
46	Norton's Pt. (Katama), M.V.	25			
47	Martha's Vineyard (other)				
TOTAL PAIRS:		1,856+	5,625	1,851	31
TOTAL COLONIES:		38	18	5	6

³includes "Charlies" and "High Head South"

⁴includes Whale Island

MASSACHUSETTS TERN INVENTORY
1981

The following data are representative of the period June 1-20, 1981 except where noted otherwise. The abbreviation "P" indicates that birds were known to have been present but census data are unavailable for the location. All numbers represent pairs.

No.	Colony	Least	Common	Roseate	Arctic
1	Woodbridge I., Newburyport		150		
2	Crane's Beach, Ipswich	40			
3a	Plum Island Marsh		97		
3b	Plum Island Refuge	80			
4	Plum Island State Park, Ipswich				
5	Milk Island, Rockport				
6	Tinker's Island, Salem		115		
7	Snake Island, Winthrop	1			
8	Hog Island, Hull		130		
9	Third Cliff, Scituate	P			
10	Fourth Cliff, Scituate	70			
11	Duxbury Beach, Duxbury	40			
12	Plymouth Beach, Plymouth	3	550	5	13
13	Bird Island, Marion		600	1,500	
14	Ram Island, Mattapoissett				
15	Fairhaven area				
16a	Barney's Joy, Dartmouth	30			
16b	Salter's Point, Dartmouth				
16c	Gooseberry Neck, Dartmouth				
17a	South Cape Beach, Mashpee				
17b	Washburn Island, Falmouth ¹	80			
17c	Popponesset Beach, Mashpee				
18	Old Harbor Beach, N. Sandwich	90			
19	Scorton Creek, Sandwich	1			
20	Dead Neck-Sampson's I., Barnstable	65	160	190	
21a	Craigville Beach, Barnstable				
21b	Long Beach, Barnstable	20	30		
22	Kalmus Beach, Barnstable	10			
23	Sandy Neck, Barnstable				
24	Gray's Beach, W. Yarmouth		860	45	
25	West Dennis Beach, Dennis	180	260		
26	Monomoy Wilderness, Chatham ²	45+	1,995	35	6
27a	Harding's Beach, Chatham				
27b	Harding's Beach Point, Chatham	2			
27c	North Beach, Chatham	P			
28a	Nauset Heights, Orleans	415	2		7
28b	Nauset Spit, Eastham	81			3
29	New Island, Eastham & Orleans		520		
30	Marconi Station, Wellfleet	30			

¹ includes 5 pairs at Sippewissett, Falmouth

² also contained an estimated 1,000 pairs of Laughing Gull

No.	Colony	Least	Common	Roseate	Arctic
(cont.)					
31a	Jeremy Point, Wellfleet				
31b	Great Island, Wellfleet	15			
32	Pamet, Truro				
33a	High Head, Truro ³	54			
33b	Exit 9, Provincetown	26			
33c	Mallicoat's, Provincetown	1			
33d	Race Point East, Provincetown	11			
33e	Race Point C. G. Sta., P'town				
33f	Race Point Light, Provincetown	30			1
34	Wood End Light, Provincetown	21	34		
35	Long Point, Provincetown				
36a	Nashawena Island, Gosnold	25	50		
36b	Penikese Island, Gosnold				
36c	Cuttyhunk Island, Gosnold	6			
37	Noman's Land, Chilmark, M. V.				
38a	Nantucket Wildlife Refuge				
38b	Coskata-Coatue W. R., Nantucket	121	1		
38c	Coatue Wildlife Ref., Nantucket				
39	Quidnet, Nantucket				1
40a	Siasconset, Nantucket	81			
40b	Cisco Beach, Nantucket				
40c	Eel Point, Nantucket				
40d	Quaise Point, Nantucket				
40e	Tom Never's Head, Nantucket				
40f	Surfside, Nantucket	12			
40g	Nantucket (other)				
41a	Tuckernuck I., Nantucket ⁴	25			
41b	Muskeget Isl., Nantucket		1		
42	Chappaquidick Isl., M.V.				
43	Tashmoo Spit, M.V.	30			
44	Cape Pogue W.R., M.V.	90	70		
45	Sarson's Inlet area, M.V.				
46	Norton's Pt. (Katama), M.V.	25			
47	Martha's Vineyard (other)				
TOTAL PAIRS:		1,856+	5,625	1,851	31
TOTAL COLONIES:		38	18	5	6

³includes "Charlies" and "High Head South"

⁴includes Whale Island