

Hope for the Black Tern

Monday, May 11, 2020 | 6:00pm - 7:30pm CDT

Link to Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2J9gsGzjp4>

For more information, visit: <https://gl.audubon.org/thenest/webinars>

Webinar Presentations & Links

Stephanie Beilke, Conservation Science Manager, Audubon Great Lakes – Moderator

Don Lyons, Director of Conservation Science, National Audubon Society - Waterbird Science & Conservation

- Those 2 lonely seabirds are Razorbills! <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/razorbill>
- Is there a small breeding colony of Roseate Terns on Eastern Egg Island?
 - there IS a small colony of Roseate Terns at Eastern Egg Rock in Maine and a couple other islands in Maine! The majority of Roseates (~90% in most years) nest at those three colonies in New York and Massachusetts, however. If a problem happened in that area, it could really impact the population in a major way.
 - I learned a TON about Eastern Egg Rock from the Project Puffin book, though I have never been there. <https://projectpuffin.audubon.org/about/project-puffin-story>
- What species is that spotty gull?
 - the photo of the gull holding the tern chick was a Great Black-backed Gull. They are fierce predators - even Herring Gulls fear them!
- Did you know many blackbirds nest colonially in wetland areas? They are waterbirds, too!
- Learn more about Project Puffin at <https://projectpuffin.audubon.org>
- Can you tell which are live birds and which are decoys? Learn more about conservation decoys at <https://projectpuffin.audubon.org/decoys/mad-river-decoys-audubon>
- We're building an entirely new database of seabird restoration projects; you can check out the map at <http://www.seabirddatabase.org>
- Places to see Black Terns (from audience): Tawas Point, Metzger Marsh (OH), Gulf Coast (FL), Point Pelee Ontario, Dunn Lake Spooner (WI), Iroquois NWF (NY), St. Clair Flats – Harsen's Island Boat Launch (if no access to boats).
- Are you familiar with bird banding and why scientists band birds? Learn more here: <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/pwrc/science/why-do-we-band-birds>
- Is there Motus Tracking on these birds? Yes, we started doing a NanoTagging project with Black Terns last year. There's a Motus Tower at Harsen's Island. Dave will be discussing tracking in the next presentation!
- If you want to help conserve Black Terns and other waterbirds, please urge your US representative to support legislation that protects seabirds at this link: <https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/ekyckxVkeUCSMOJs6fjJcA2>. For more information

about this fisheries legislation, visit this link: <https://www.audubon.org/news/fish-are-legislative-menu-recent-congressional-hearing>

- Is this due to a lack of suitable nesting areas, or is it a young bird parent error where they haven't learned how to choose a good nest site yet?
- Audubon is actually supporting local bird conservationists working in Panama Bay to protect waterbirds that nest up here with us but winter down there - black terns and other species.
- The North America wide collaborative tracking study is supported, in part, by the Migratory Connectivity Project, which supports many such projects on a range of migratory birds. Learn more: <http://www.migratoryconnectivityproject.org>
- How do these tracking devices work? I had assumed satellite, but your comment about needing to return to Tiny Marsh seems to contradict that?
 - Some tracking devices transmit to satellites but usually those are heavier and can't be used on smaller birds like Black Terns
- So, how does it work? Do the birds need to be recaptured to gather the data? What is the recapture rate?
 - With geolocators, it collects information on the level of sunlight the tag is exposed to so to approximate its location. All that information is saved on the tag itself so the birds have to be recaptured! Note: we also have used NanoTags to track terns, that don't have to be retrieved and communicate with special radio towers through the Motus network: <https://motus.org/>
 - Our resighting rate of tagged birds was ~60%; the recapture rate was ~45%. Typical for this type of study but lots of work for this species, given the habitat
 - These nanotags are so small and lightweight that some are even used to track Monarch Butterfly movements! Read more about it here: https://www.unionleader.com/news/environment/tiny-transmitters-can-track-migration-of-monarch-butterflies/article_824946bc-47b8-5f66-93aa-bf399820e460.html

Ava Landgraf Research Coordinator, Detroit Audubon - St. Clair Flats Black Tern Monitoring

- Learn about the Important Bird Areas in your state here: <https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas>
- How does one tell the difference between the male and female from a distance?
 - You actually can't tell from a distance, they look basically identical. But we can tell them apart if we are able to catch (and release-for banding) a pair since usually the male is larger than the female.
- Are Eastern Massasauga present in these marshes?
- How old are the terns when they first breed?
 - Typically at least 2 years old!

Dave Moore, Senior Waterbird Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service - Migration & Winter Locations of Black Terns

- If you happen to see or photograph a Black Tern that is sporting one of our color bands, please submit your sighting to the Bird Banding Lab, here: <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv/>

- Do the bird bands expand as the bird grows?
 - No, the bands have some extra space, but their legs don't grow significantly wider after we band them.
- Do they use colored bands in the same way that they use them on the Whoopers? Where color/order alone can ID a bird, so no need to read the band numbers?
 - Our colored bands have numbers on them and are unique for each bird that receives one! So if you get the color and the number we should be able to ID it
 - Black Terns have pretty stubby legs so, used coded bands (one) instead (although very small and hard to read!)
- What is the status of the Migratory Bird Act and how has it affected the black tern?

Erin Rowan, Conservation Associate, Audubon Great Lakes - Black Tern Monitoring & Research in the Great Lakes

- Register for our upcoming webinar about secretive marsh birds here!
<https://audubon.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcvdOGrqzliGdCqU6trSYz0HeuUMHMK-iFU>
- Is there anything known about post-fledgling survival or juvenile dispersal?
 - Out of 36 recaptured adults that we've had at St. Clair Flats since 2015 (some of which we've recaptured several times between years), only 4 were originally banded as chicks (these individuals are called natal recruits). This indicates that there is some site fidelity among adults (they will return to the same breeding grounds and sometimes the same subcolony each summer) and possibly also some site fidelity for young returning to breed. More study is needed on possible movements to other colonies (which Dave's research would indicate also occurs). Post-fledging survival is difficult to measure as it takes the young two years to reach maturity before returning to the breeding grounds. More long-term mark-recapture study is needed.
- Are failed nests, like the kind they use the floating platforms to assist with, due to lack of suitable habitat, or something else like inexperienced young birds with poor nest site selection?
- On the UP colony, you said they seem to nest every other year. Do you know where they nest in the alternate years?
- I know cameras and geo locators can be expensive. Do the various black tern projects need donations, and if so, where can people donate to?

Upcoming Events

Webinar: Bitterns, Herons and Rails, Oh My! Marsh Bird Stories from the Great Lakes
<https://gl.audubon.org/events/bitterns-herons-and-rails-oh-my-marsh-bird-stories-great-lakes>

Please register in advance for the webinar here:

<https://audubon.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcvdOGrqzliGdCqU6trSYz0HeuUMHMK-iFU>