

Longevity Record for a Roseate Tern

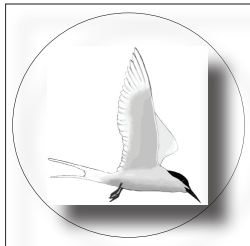
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On 15 July 1993, Nisbet banded a Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) chick with a U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory band on one leg and with a 4-character metal field-readable (MFR) band (E792) on the other leg at Bird Island, Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, as part of a Cooperative Roseate Tern Metapopulation Project (hereafter CRTMP, Nisbet and Spendelow 1999). Based on size and development of down, the chick was estimated to have been hatched on the previous day, 14 July 1993. This bird was trapped by Spendelow on a nest at Ram Island, Buzzards Bay (10 km from Bird Island) on 10 June 2010. At that time Spendelow added four plastic colorbands to make a unique 6-band combination including one orange band above the tarsal joint on each leg, so that only one of upper bands needed to be seen to make a positive identification.

In 2011, most CRTMP collaborators switched from using MFR bands to 3-character plastic field-readable (PFR) bands (Spendelow 2018). Spendelow also stopped doing fieldwork at the Buzzards Bay colony sites in 2011 and switched his focus to making observations at staging sites around the “Cape Cod and Islands” area of southeastern Massachusetts where a large fraction of the regional population of Roseate Terns is known to aggregate in the post-breeding period from July-September each year (Trull et al. 1999, Spendelow 2018, Davis et al. 2019). Funding from the U.S. National Park Service’s Cape Cod National Seashore resulted in several other observers helping to resight Roseate Terns in 2014-2015 at several staging sites simultaneously (Davis et al.

2019), but after 2016 most observations at staging sites were made by Spendelow.

By 2012, E792 had lost the middle right plastic band (and by 2014 it also had lost the middle left band) and thereafter positive identifications again required reading part or all of the MFR band. As the number of Roseate Terns with PFR bands seen at the staging areas increased over the years, the amount of time spent trying to read MFR bands decreased, but Spendelow continued to make a special effort each year to try to read the MFRs of former 6-banded adults that then had partial colorband combinations. From 2010 through 2021, E792 (or a bird with a similar colorband combination) was seen on 18 occasions at six staging sites around Cape Cod, but after 2015 Spendelow was the only person able to get close enough to read E792. In 2020 and 2021 he read E792 four times, all at North Beach, Chatham, the last two times being on 19 and 20 August 2021. The last date was 28 years, 1 month, and 5 days after E792 was banded as a chick, making it the oldest Roseate Tern reported to date.

LITERATURE CITED

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