

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION  
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

A. Proposal: Inclusion of Sterna dougalli in Appendix II.

B. Proposer: Ireland.

C. Supporting Statement:

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class	Aves
1.2 Order	Charadriiformes
1.3 Family/Sub-family	Laridae/Sterninae
1.4 Genus/Species	Sterna dougalli
1.5 Common names	
English:	Roseate Tern
French:	Sterne de Dougall
Spanish:	Charrán rosado
Portuguese:	Androinha-do-mar-rosa

2. Biological data

2.1 Distribution in Atlantic

In Atlantic pan-oceanic. In summer breeding in Ireland, Britain (to 56°00'N), France (Brittany), the Azores (Portugal) and possibly Madeira and Selvagens on the eastern side; Canada (to 47°30'N), United States of America (Maine to North Carolina) and at various places in the Gulf of Mexico, Bahamas and the Caribbean. In winter distribution not fully known but occurs in tropical waters in Gulf of Guinea (West Africa), especially on coast of Ghana; and in the Caribbean and north coast of South American continent as far as 10°S. Also occasionally in the Pacific Ocean on the western side of the Central American Isthmus. See Section 5 for full list of Atlantic states in which the species occurs.

2.2 Population

The NW European breeding population has declined from c.1,100 pairs in early 1960s to c.550-600 by 1990, of which c.325 pairs were in Ireland, c.100 pairs in Brittany, and the remainder in Britain. About 1,000 pairs were spread over a number of islands in the Azores in 1990. Only a few breeds irregularly on Madeira and the Selvagens. The eastern North American population (1001 of St. Lawrence to North Carolina) has also suffered a severe

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decline in recent decades and currently totals c.1,300 breeding pairs. Of the Atlantic populations that of the Gulf of Mexico, Bahamas and Caribbean is least well known but is thought to be reasonably stable at at least several thousand pairs.

## 2.3 Habitat

Mostly restricted to coastal zone, though some migratory routes are trans-oceanic. There is the possibility that birds wintering in the Gulf of Guinea may move offshore in the latter part of the winter, following shoals of Sardinella. In NW Europe and eastern North America the species feeds mainly on inshore shoaling Ammodytes and Clupea. Preferred breeding sites are small, generally low, rocky, sandy or shingle islands and islets, though cliff-nesting occurs on the Azores. More than most other tern species the Roseate Tern seeks cover in dense vegetation for its nest, but will also use burrows or crevices in rocks. Where provided, nest boxes/chick shelters are readily used. In Ireland the main colony in the 1960s (with 1,500+ pairs) used dense stands of Leymus and Ammophila on a transient sandbank; now the main Irish colony (320 pairs in 1990) uses cover of Lavatera arborea on a tiny granitic lighthouse island.

## 2.4 Migrations

The population in the Gulf of Mexico, Bahamas and Caribbean appears to be the least migratory, moving southwards from c.25°N to c.20°S for the winter. The NW European population is the most migratory, moving from c.56°N to the Equator. The eastern North American population moves to the Caribbean and north coast of South America. Some, if not all of the Azorean population winters in the Gulf of Guinea. Almost all first winter birds and many second winter birds remain in the wintering areas until they reach breeding age (usually three years). Migrations appear to be mainly along coastlines, where staging areas are known in some regions. However, trans-oceanic movements also occur, e.g. from Azores to West Africa and from eastern North America to the Caribbean. The more northerly breeding populations are present in the breeding areas usually from mid-May to mid-September.

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3. Threat data3.1 Direct human threat

In the past, especially the 19th century, large numbers of birds and eggs were collected, especially in northern colonies -- for taxidermy, the millinery trade, egg collections, etc. The main direct human threat in recent times has been the capture (for sport and food) of large numbers of Roseate Terns on the wintering grounds, especially in Ghana (West Africa) and Guyana (South America), but these activities have greatly reduced, at least partially due to protection and education. In the Azores young terns have been used as fishing bait, but they are now protected. Human disturbance (usually inadvertent) has also been a problem at breeding colonies in the recent past, but most northern colonies are now protected and wardened.

3.2 Indirect human threats

There is so far no evidence of reduction in survival of chicks or full-grown birds due to human over-exploitation of Roseate Tern food species such as has happened with Arctic Terns Sterna paradisaea in northern Scotland, and Puffins Fratercula arctica in Norway.

Organic-chlorines have been recorded in eggs and tissue of Roseate Terns in the United States of America and deformities in chicks have been linked with these pollutants. However, these are thought not to be a major problem and most sectors of the Atlantic population are uncontaminated.

3.3 Predation

Predation by mammalian and avian predators (including owls and raccoons in North America; rats in the Azores; foxes, rats, mustelids, Peregrines Falco peregrinus, large gulls in NW Europe) has resulted in catastrophic breeding failures from time to time. Nowadays these predators are being controlled at most of the protected/wardened northern colonies.

3.4 Competition

Competition for nesting space, mainly with large gulls, has been a problem in some areas, but a combination of gull culling

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West Africa (outside Ghana) and identify any problems there which may be affecting survival; (e) identification and protection of possibly vital migration staging areas; (f) expanded programme of education re conservation of Roseate and other terns.

### 5. Range States (in Atlantic)

(Breeding range indicated by underlining)

#### 5.1 Eastern Atlantic

Ireland, Britain, France, Portugal (incl. Azores, Madeira, Selvagans), Spain (incl. Canary Islands), Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea?, Gabon?

#### 5.2 Western Atlantic

Canada, United States of America (incl. Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Isles), Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Surinam, French Guiana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Brazil, Bermuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Martinique (France), Barbados?, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada?, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla (U.K.), Turks and Caicos (U.K.), British Virgin Isles.

### 6. Comments from Range States

Not available.

(An international Roseate Tern workshop held in Ireland in March 1991, with representatives from Ireland, Britain, Portugal [Azores], Ghana and U.S.A., recommended that the Roseate Tern be proposed for inclusion in Appendix II of the Bonn Convention.)

### 7. Additional remarks

The Supporting Statement is limited to the Atlantic population as very little is known about status, threats, etc. relating to populations outside the Atlantic area.

Depending on the wishes of the Atlantic Range States agreements could be made between all or some of the Range States

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throughout the Atlantic, or separate agreements could be made between Range States in the eastern and western Atlantic.

The possibility should be open for Range States outside the Atlantic to make agreements concerning the conservation of the Roseate Tern.

#### 8. References

- Cramp, S. (ed.) 1985. Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. IV. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Elliott, G. (ed.) 1991. Roseate Tern News, No. 5. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sandy.
- Harrison, C. 1982. An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palearctic. Collins, London.
- Harrison, P. 1983. Seabirds: an identification guide. Croom Helm, Beckenham.