

## ROSEATE TERN SPECIES RECOVERY PROGRAMME



### Isles of Scilly 2005 Report

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## **Roseate Tern Species Recovery Programme – Isles of Scilly 2003-2005 Summary**

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## Acknowledgements

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Doug Page on St. Agnes and Viv Jackson on St. Martin's both helped the project with their tern sightings from these islands, as did Seal Researcher Steven Westcott when he was visiting uninhabited islands.

## Abstract

The 2005 season saw the first spring record of a Roseate Tern in Scilly for over 5 years, with several other reported sightings over the summer, though no breeding was suspected. The season also saw the first breeding record of the Arctic Tern in the islands since 1977 with a pair laying on Green Island Tresco. Unfortunately the eggs never hatched as an adult was taken from the nest by a cat or peregrine early in incubation. A single pair of Sandwich Tern again laid and abandoned a single egg for the third year in a row.

The early season work built on the successes of the last two years and tried to maximise the chances of common tern breeding success around the island. Further habitat management on Annet has now succeeded in more than tripling the size of suitable tern habitat on the island. A further thirty nest/shelter boxes were made and placed out near nests once incubation had begun.

Human disturbance around colonies caused problems early in the 2005 season with birds that had been prospecting the site on Samson abandoning the area as a result. Eventually 50 pairs settled on a previously unmanaged rocky island (Peashopper) where they suffered heavily from predation by a great black-backed gull. Small numbers again chose to nest on Green Island Samson, but again there were losses to high tides. As a result this year Common Terns managed to fledge just 15 chicks from 65 pairs, a productivity of 0.23, the worse in the last 5 years.

## Colony Management

The main focus of habitat work was again on Annet where a second plastic covered plot was created in April 2005 with the help of IOSWT and ISBG volunteers. The colony site had been inundated by severe winter storm waves during Nov 2004, and large amounts of flotsam and jetsam deposited here. The site was cleared and 28 black sacks were filled with rubbish much of which could have been potentially hazardous to small tern chicks. The winter storm waves had also flooded the site and the salt water helped to prevent bracken from colonising the area and improved and increased the size of natural nesting habitat available to terns. The original plastic plot created in April 2004 had become uncovered in places but was generally in good shape with some desirable plants growing in the earth laid on top. This plot was maintained and the plastic exposed re-covered with earth and sand. Driftwood and plastic jerry can shelters were added to the second plot to provide cover for chicks. The original site has now been tripled in size and could potentially hold upwards of 60 pairs of tern. A pallet hide was erected on the boulder bank to aid watching the colony and reduce tern warden disturbance at the site. This proved very successful with terns landing unconcerned nearby during May when prospecting the colony. The hide could be seen from the sea on the south side of the island and from parts of St Agnes and drew a few comments from the local boatmen and Agnes residents. It was dismantled at the end of the season and stored near the large carn just north of the tern colony.



**Figure :** The 1<sup>st</sup> plastic plot after being recovered with earth (left) and the new second plastic plot after completion in April 2005 (right)

A further 30 nest boxes (a mixture of Roseate Tern boxes and A-frame shelters) were made with the assistance of IOSWT volunteers. It was decided to use these reactively and place them near tern nests once eggs had been discovered. This approach meant that all tern nests discovered in 2005 had a shelter positioned within 5 feet. On Peashopper 18 of these shelters were placed and proved instrumental in the survival of the 15 chicks that avoided predation from the Great Black-backed Gull and managed to fledge from this site. The shelters placed on Green Island Samson were also used by chicks before the abandonment of this site.

Some small scale habitat improvements were also made to the North Hill Samson colony site in April 2005. The cleared areas created around nest boxes in 2004 were maintained and increased where appropriate, and piles of sand applied to parts of these areas to provide a choice of nesting habitat at each box. The habitats available at each box are now sand, bare earth and short heather. Nesting material in the form of dead heather and cut grasses from nearby on North Hill were placed in each cleared area with the hope that these would be incorporated into nests and provide improved shelter for eggs and chicks from summer storms.

Six additional tern shelters were made using plastic jerry cans washed up on the island during the winter storms. The tops and sides of these were cut off to create suitable shelter sites. A pallet hide was also built on the North West side of the colony to allow improved monitoring of the site and also to reduce tern warden disturbance. This proved useful though it was perhaps located a bit too close to the Lesser Black-backed Gull colony as several nests nearby were briefly disturbed when entering and exiting the hide.



**Figure :** Cleared areas around Roseate Tern nest boxes on North Hill Samson had sand applied to offer a choice of nesting habitat at each box (left), and A-frame shelters were placed on Green Island Samson to provide shelter for each tern nest discovered (right).

North Hill Samson was again roped off to prevent access to the tern colony. New paths were cut by Dave Mawer to allow visitors to walk around north hill without disturbing the terns and these were maintained during the summer with the assistance of IOSWT volunteers.

Laminated signs stating the reasons and the dates of closure were mounted on posts. Signs were placed at three locations around the roped off area, at the top of the landing beach on Samson and also on the St Mary's Quay. The St Mary's Boatman's Association were also informed of the reasons and duration of closure and asked to provide visitors to Samson with this information at their ticket kiosk. Closure dates were given as being from the 30<sup>th</sup> April - 31<sup>st</sup> August. This would allow the site to be people free during nest prospecting in May and also to allow for any late breeders in late July early August. Once it became obvious the site was not going to be used during 2005 the fence was dismantled on 19<sup>th</sup> August and stored under the carn at the southern side of north hill.

Closure signs were also placed on both sides of Peashopper and Green Island Tresco, as well as posters showing which islands were closed, for how long, and why, in suitable locations around the Tresco Estate. Posters were located in the Tresco Estate Office, in the Island Hotel, at the Tresco sailing club, in the New Inn and in the shop.

*Deates?*

## Breeding season 2005 summary

### Common Tern Breeding Summary

A total of around 65 pairs of Common Tern nested in Scilly in 2005, a decrease of 10 pairs from 2004. Between them they raised no more than 15 chicks, a productivity of 0.23 chicks per pair, the worst productivity rate in the last 5 years. All three of the main sites of the last two years (Annet, North Hill Samson and Appletree Bay Tresco) remained empty all summer, with just a single failed nesting attempt made between them.

Minimum Number of Pairs, Nests, Eggs and Chicks by Site											
Colony Site	No.	Non breeders	3	2	1	Eggs laid	Eggs pred	Eggs ab'dnd	Eggs hatched	Chicks fledged	Total
	Pairs	Egg	Egg	Egg	Iaid	Predated	Ab'dnd	Hatched	Fledged	Productivity	
<b>Annet</b>	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Green Island Samson</b>	11	10	7	5	2	33	11+	5	13	0	0
<b>Green Island Tresco</b>	3	8	2	1	0	8	1	4	0	0	0
<b>Peashopper</b>	50+	50+	35	16	4	143	6	20	42	15	0.3
<b>St Martin's</b>	2	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	3+	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>60+</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>20+</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0.23</b>

Figure : Table showing the minimum number of pairs, nests, eggs, and chicks of common terns nesting at various sites in Scilly in 2005.

184+

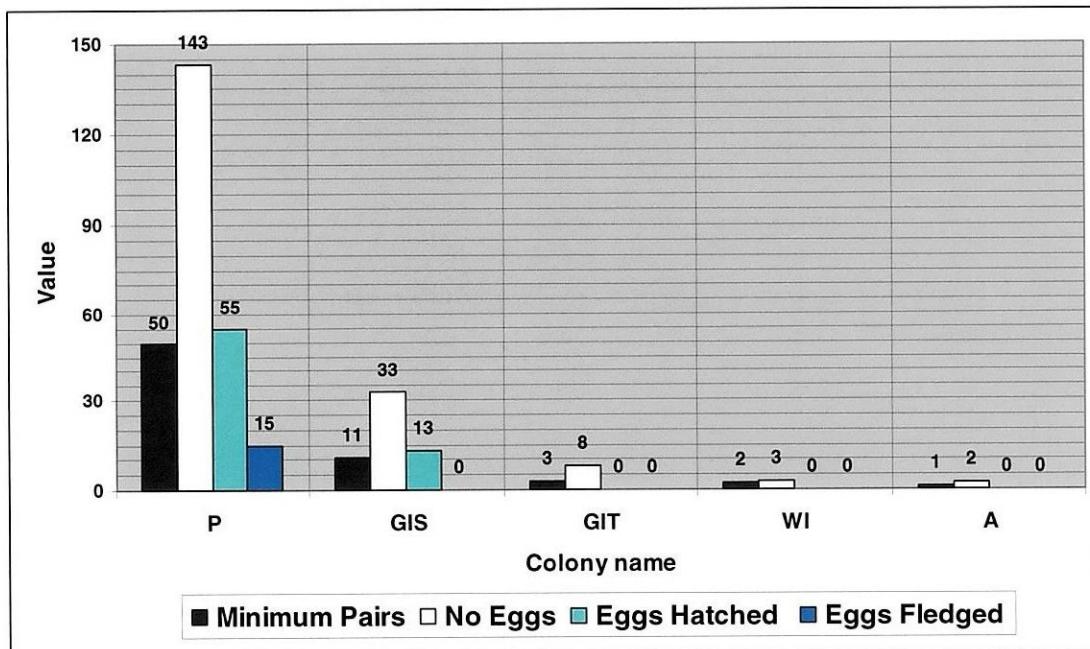


Figure : Bar chart showing summary of breeding success of the five Common Tern colonies discovered in Scilly in 2004. Colony names are summarised as follows: **Samson**; GIS = Green Island; **Tresco**; P = Peashopper, GIT = Green Island; **St. Martin's**; WI = White Island; A = **Annet**.

Approximately 50 pairs eventually decided to nest on Peashopper and this was the main colony in 2005, with up to 150 birds present at the site. All 15 successfully reared chicks were from this site. While this site was sheltered from bad weather and high tides, there were problems with disturbance in the form of day trippers, shrimpers, and canoes on and around the island. Gull predation was also a major problem here and a single pair of Greater Black-backed Gulls was identified as being the limiting factor to productivity at this site in 2005. This pair was thought responsible for the loss of at least 30 small tern chicks in the space of 4 days.

**Productivity 0.3**

3 pairs from Peashopper attempted to re-nest on Green Island, Tresco, but they abandoned the site within a week, and cat droppings were found here. **Productivity 0**

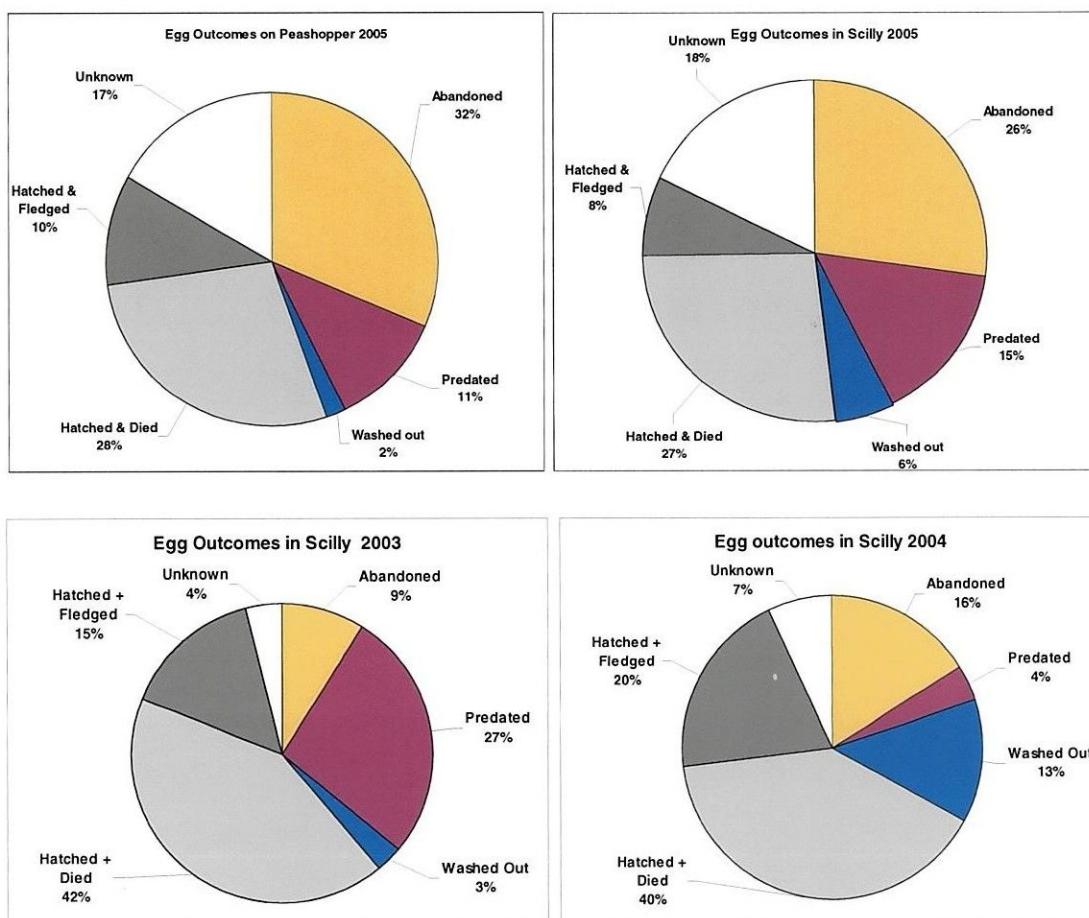
11 pairs nested on Green Island, Samson, with 3 nests lost to high tides, though many of the remaining eggs hatched, chicks disappeared and several nests were predated by an Oystercatcher or abandoned. **Productivity 0**

1 pair nested on the southern end of Annet in late May, but the eggs were predated by gulls within a week. The site was then visited by up to 5 pairs over the summer though they never settled. **Productivity 0**

North Hill Samson had no nest attempts despite being used by upwards of 100 terns early in the season. Human disturbance and changeable weather were thought the reasons for their abandonment of the site. Up to 10 pairs occasionally visited over the rest of the summer, but failed to make any nest attempts.

Appletree Banks Tresco was totally empty all summer with just one pair seen to visit here on just a couple of occasions over the summer. Other Tresco sites were also empty.

Two pairs were reported by Viv Jackson as nesting on White Island St Martins (as they did in 2004) but despite several checks over the season no birds or nests could be found.



**Figure :** Pie Charts showing comparison of egg outcomes in Scilly in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

### Non-breeding Common tern

2005 saw an increased number of non-breeding birds present in Scilly. On Peashopper there were at least 50 non-breeders present at the site. Several of these were identifiable as young birds (i.e. less than 3 years old) due to their white foreheads during June. This is in contrast to previous years where few non-breeders have appeared to be present at colonies.



Figure : The first summer Common Tern on Peashopper (left) and a second summer Common Tern also on Peashopper (right). Greater numbers of non-breeding birds were present in Scillonian waters than in previous years.

Of interest a 1<sup>st</sup> summer Common Tern spent the summer around Scillonian tern colonies. It was discovered on 21<sup>st</sup> May by John Higginson and Will Wagstaff on Merrick Island in the Tresco Channel. By 1<sup>st</sup> June it had moved to Samson before following all the breeding terns to Peashopper on the 8<sup>th</sup> June and it remained here for the rest of the summer being seen last on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August. This age of common tern is very rare in Britain, and so much so that until quite recently was thought to be a different species. This may be only the second record of a 1<sup>st</sup> summer Common Tern in Scilly.

## Other Breeding Terns

### Arctic Tern

In 2003 a lone male Arctic Tern was seen to frequent the tern colony on Appletree Banks, Tresco. In 2004 presumably the same bird was present in the colony on North Hill, Samson.

In 2005 what was thought to be the same bird was seen on 11<sup>th</sup> May around Pentle Bay, Tresco. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 3 adult birds were seen displaying over North Hill, Samson, and on 9<sup>th</sup> June a pair was seen in courtship on Green Island, Tresco. They were here daily until the 13<sup>th</sup> June when a 2-egg nest was discovered on the top of the island the 1<sup>st</sup> nesting by this species in Scilly since 1977. Shelters were placed around the nest site to provide cover for the chicks, Steve Parks from the Tresco Estate was informed and after agreement signs were placed stating the island was closed.



**Figure :** The pair of Arctic Tern (above) nesting on Green Island Tresco were the first confirmed breeding in Scilly since 1977. Stone shelters were placed around the nest site (below left) to provide shelter for the chicks if the two-eggs hatched (below right).

The birds were still incubating and defending the area on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, but on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brian Thomas found it deserted with large numbers of feathers littering the site, and the eggs still warm. The number of feathers present suggested the adult could not have survived, though no carcass was found to confirm the predator, it was thought the local peregrine or a cat was responsible. Cat droppings were found on the island on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August.

Perhaps as many as 5 Arctic Terns spent the summer in Scilly in 2005 with a different pair to the nesting pair seen on Annet on the 17<sup>th</sup> June and on Peashopper on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The last summer sighting was of a single adult bird on Green Island Samson on the 30<sup>th</sup> June.

### Sandwich Tern

A lone pair of Sandwich Tern again laid 1 egg on Peashopper but it was abandoned at discovery. Up to 3 pairs were present all summer in and around tern colonies though no further nest attempts were discovered.



Figure : Young Sandwich Terns (left) reared elsewhere were present in Scillonian waters from 11<sup>th</sup> July until early September. Initially they favoured roosting on buoys before moving to Green Islands off Samson & Tresco. For the third year in a row a single pair laid and abandoned a single egg (right).

Sandwich Tern counts were made on 54 occasions between 19<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. Maximum spring count was of 10 birds in early May and in autumn over 150 on Stoney Island, Samson in late August. On 15<sup>th</sup> May a pair was noted displaying over Pentle Bay Tresco. On 8<sup>th</sup> June a lone abandoned egg was discovered on Peashopper. By the 15<sup>th</sup> June a pair of courting Sandwich Tern were noted trying to land in the Green Island tern colony but were repeatedly chased off by the Common terns already nesting there. On several further occasions of the next week a courting pair of sandwich tern were seen trying to land in the Peashopper tern colony but were chased off by the common terns already nesting there. Perhaps this inter-specific competition is the reason for the repeated abandonment of eggs by Sandwich Tern in Scilly. The first migrating birds were known to return on 11<sup>th</sup> July with juvenile birds present from then on.

### Little Tern

On Thurs 21<sup>st</sup> April an adult Little Tern was found fishing around the NE side of Samson. It was seen to catch 3+ Sandeels. This is the same place a Little Tern was seen on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2004. Brian Thomas reported an adult from Green Island, Tresco on Fri 10<sup>th</sup> June

### Roseate Tern

For the second time in three years an adult Roseate Tern spent a few days around existing tern colonies in Scilly and was seen to over-fly the tern colonies with the common terns during dreads.



**Figure :** A Little Tern (left) spent the afternoon fishing along Samson's North Beach in April, the second spring sighting at this site in as many years. A fine adult Roseate Tern (right) spent several days around the Samson tern colony in mid May.

The first spring sighting of an adult Roseate Tern in Scilly for at least 5 years brought high hopes for the season. This bird had a metal ring on both legs meaning it had been rung at a UK or Irish tern colony. During its stay it frequented the Samson flats and roosted on Stoney Island. On 16<sup>th</sup> May it was seen to catch several fish off the North end of Stoney Island and accompanied the Common Tern's in several dreads from the offshore rocks to the North Hill colony site. Unfortunately it did not find a mate and remain to breed. There were two further reports in June of presumably at least one different bird that had failed breeding elsewhere in the UK. Neither June report was confirmed by the Tern Warden despite being at both localities within an hour of the original reports.

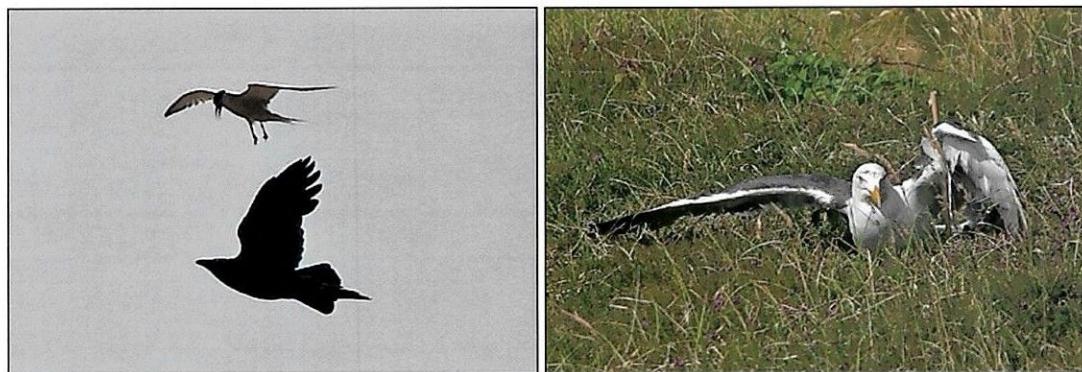
All reported Roseate Tern sightings as follows:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 15 <sup>th</sup> May  | - Will Wagstaff and I saw adult on Stoney Island, Samson |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> May  | - I saw adult fishing around Stoney Island               |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> May  | - Douggie Wyatt saw adult near Stoney Island             |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> June  | - Bob Flood saw adult near Skirt Island, Tresco          |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> June | - Viv Jackson saw adult near Peashopper                  |

## Predation

### Gull Management

Gull nest removal was carried out initially on Samson North Hill, and then only on Peashopper once terns had settled on this as their main nest site. Gull deterrents in the form of fishing line strung between short bamboo poles across the roosting/loafing area close to the tern colony on North Hill successfully reduced the number of gulls using the site from 25+ in May to just 3 or 4 birds by the end of the summer. The gull roost site moved to the north of the island. While proving successful in deterring gulls from the area the fishing wire also caused 3 gull fatalities, with 2 adults and a juvenile being found dead having got tangled in the lines. A further adult was found tangled in the lines, but was released unharmed.



**Figure :** A hybrid Hooded x Carrion Crow being mobbed by a Common Tern near Peashopper (left) and a Lesser Black-backed Gull caught in the gull deterrent on North Hill, Samson was released unharmed (right).

On Peashopper a single nest of a Lesser Black-backed Gull had to be removed on two occasions before the birds gave up nesting, though the adults continued to frequent the site. A Great Black-back Gull pair also nested at the site, and when its nest came to be destroyed it was found the eggs had already hatched. Two small chicks were killed, but despite an extensive search the third could not be found. Two weeks later it appeared on the edge of the island with both parents in attendance. At this time one parent was seen entering the tern colony to look for tern chicks and eggs. It stayed in the colony for over  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour despite being mobbed by over 80 terns, and was seen to take two tern chicks. It was decided to try and move the gull chick to another island nearby hoping the parents would follow. However the chick kept on swimming back to the Peashopper. Two days later the chick was caught and killed but by then the damage had been done and at least 30 tern chicks were thought to have been lost to the adult Greaters. The gull chick was laid on its back with wings outstretched on the edge of the island and this seemed to have the desired effect of deterring the adult from using the site as they were not seen again.. A review of the literature shows that a pair of Great Black-backed Gulls has nested here for the last 10 years (potentially the same pair each year) and they may have proved to be a limiting factor in tern breeding success at this site during this time. This site has also had rats in the past, and this may have been a limiting factor, though it is now rat free

## Mobbing Observations

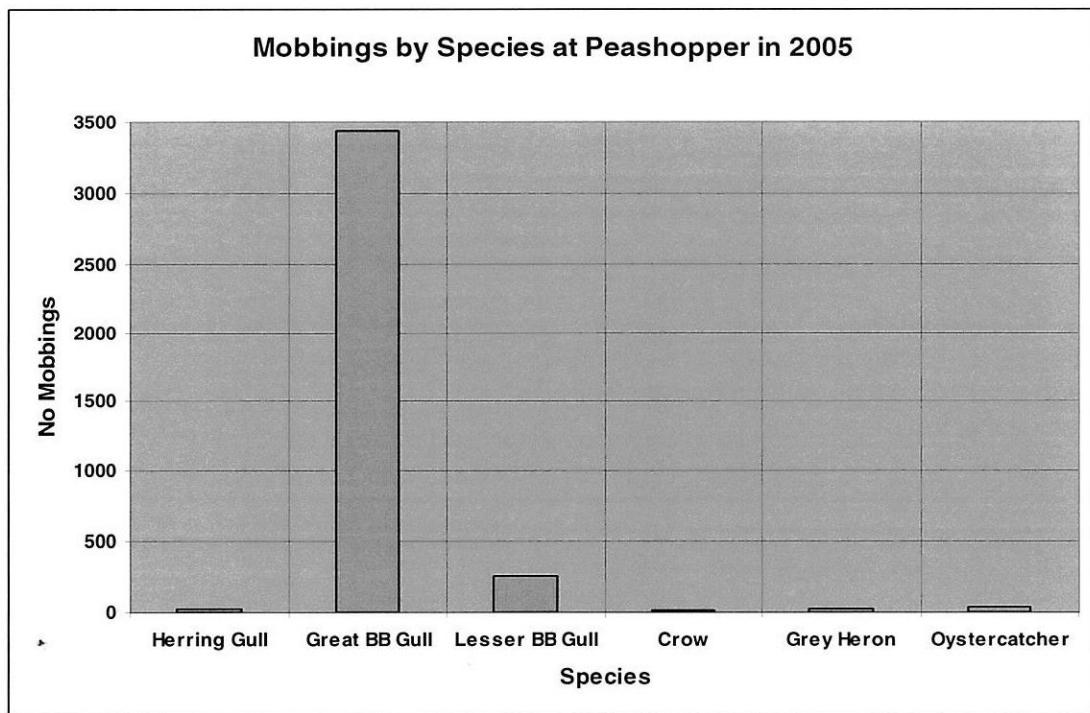
As in previous years timed half hour mobbing observations were made where the species being mobbed, the number of terns mobbing, and the number of mobbings made were recorded. In 2005 the majority of observations were made on Peashopper as it was not possible to get close enough, for long enough, to Green Island Samson to collect accurate data. In previous years it had been possible to observe tern colonies as a whole and note every mobbing occurrence at the site, however due to the nature of the site at Peashopper it was not possible to view the whole island at one time so counts were made from areas where as much as possible was in view.



**Figure :** The Great Black-backed Gull chick swimming back to Peashopper was continually mobbed by terns (left), as was the adult bird (middle) which predated at least 30 common tern chicks at the same site. A pair of Lesser Black-backed Gull eventually gave up nesting on Peashopper after their nest was destroyed, but remained in the area and were continually harassed by terns (right).

The bar chart overleaf shows that Great Black-backed Gulls experienced the vast majority of mobbings observed at Peashopper in 2005. Many of these related to the pair of Greater's nesting on Peashopper itself, though other Greater's nesting elsewhere in the Foreman's Island complex were mobbed if they flew too close to the tern colony. At least one second summer Greater was observed frequenting the Peashopper area for much of the summer though it was not observed to land on the island. Grey Heron feathers were found on Peashopper on 17<sup>th</sup> August suggesting a heron had either roosted here or had been searching for abandoned eggs and/or chicks.

Interestingly the Lesser Black-backed pair nesting on Peashopper was not subjected to as regular mobbings as the Greater pair, despite nesting equally as close to the tern colony, and persisting in the area for some time after they abandoned nest building. This suggests that the terns view the Great Black-backed pair as being more of a threat to breeding success and the observations made of the Greater taking tern chicks would suggest they are correct.



**Figure :** Bar Chart showing the number of observed mobbings by terns of selected species at Peashopper in 2005. The total number of mobbings for each species was determined by summing the totals of number of terns mobbing x number times mobbed during each observation.

Using the table below it is possible to determine a figure for the regularity of predator presence around a colony. Using the twelve predatory species listed above (cuckoo can be discounted as it is off no threat to tern breeding success, but was mobbed presumably due to its raptor like appearance) a predator of some sort was present around tern colonies on 25% of visits, and on 30% of the visits where a predator was present were they actually mobbed by terns.

Species	No times around colonies	No times terns mobbed	Max No Terns Mobbing
Peregrine	4	1	1
Carrion Crow	10	1	2
Buzzard	1	0	0
Marsh Harrier	2	1	5
Grey Heron	2	1	10
Oystercatcher	25	7	15
Lesser BB Gull	37	8	20
Greater BB Gull	30	12	50
Herring Gull	18	6	4
Turnstone	10	0	0
Little Egret	8	0	0
Raven	2	0	0
Cuckoo	1	1	7

**Figure :** Table showing predatory species observed around tern colonies in 2005. In total 42 visits were made to tern colonies in 2005. The 1<sup>st</sup> column represents the no. visits where a predatory species was present near a colony. The 2<sup>nd</sup> column represents the no. visits where terns mobbed the predatory species. The 3<sup>rd</sup> column shows the maximum no. of terns mobbings a predatory species at a single time.

The single Common Tern nest on Annet was thought to have been predated at the egg stage by a Lesser Black-backed Gull nesting nearby.

## Food Availability

Methods used for monitoring food availability at tern colonies in 2005 were the same as in previous years, with fish species, and the size in relation to the length of the bill, being noted during timed half an hour observation periods. As with the mobbing observations between colony comparisons were not really possible due to the difficulty of observing sites, and as such fewer food observations were made than in the previous two years.

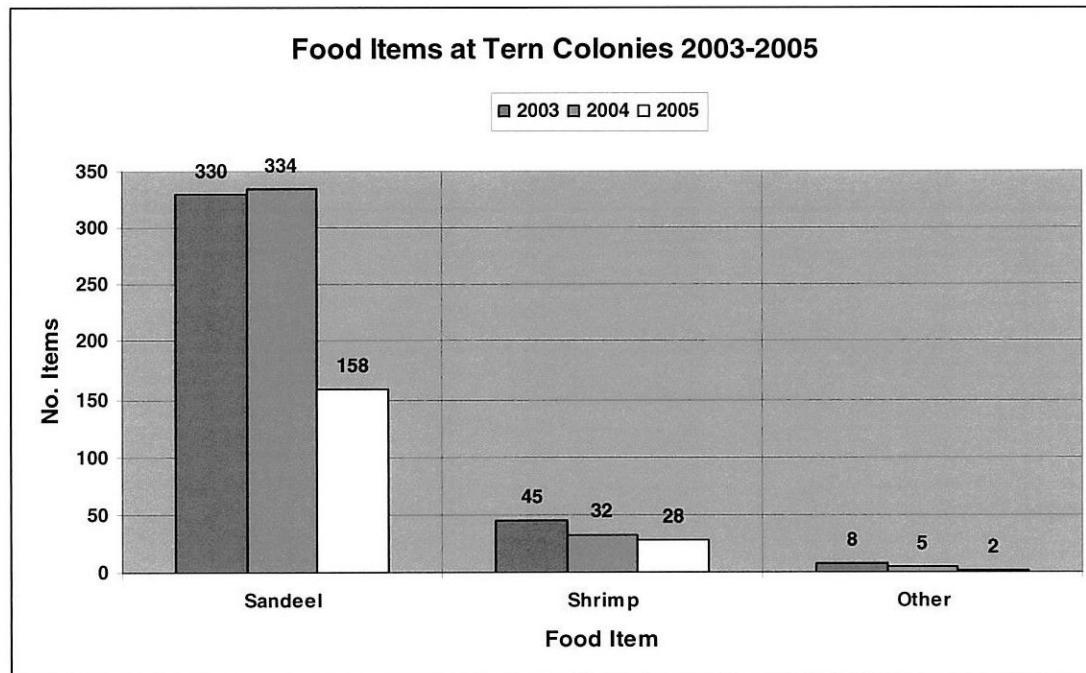


Figure : Bar chart showing the variety of food items carried to tern colonies in Scilly from 2003-2005.

16% of food items observed were shrimp, as opposed to 12% in 2003 and 8% in 2004. Perhaps this represents a difference in availability of food locally around Peashopper compared to Samson where birds mainly fished in 2004. Shrimpers were noted around Peashopper on five occasions during the summer with people taking what must have been as much as 10 kilograms of shrimp during a single visit. This appears a substantial amount of food being removed that could potentially have adverse effects for the terns breeding and fishing here.

On Peashopper food was provisioned at a rate of 0.46 food items per pair per hour over the course of the breeding season. On North Hill in 2004 food was provisioned at an average rate of 0.75 food items per pair/per hour (pp/ph) over the entire breeding season. This compares to 0.69 food items pp/ph in 2003. The reduced rate in 2005 can be explained by the fewer number of chicks being reared by the colony as a whole due to the predation experienced. This meant that fewer pairs were feeding young at a time when normally large numbers of food items would be being brought to the colony.

In fact individual tern pairs that were feeding chicks seemed to be bringing food to them at an impressively fast rate. For example on 2<sup>nd</sup> August a one month old tern chick was noted being fed sandeels 1.5-2 times the length of bill every ten minutes for over an hour. Non parent birds (presumably birds that had lost chicks to the Greater Black-backed Gull) also attempted to feed other pairs chicks from time to time though in each case the chick would not respond to them or take the food on offer.

It did not appear that food availability was a limiting factor to tern productivity in 2005, with a variety of fish sizes apparently readily available for courtship and for feeding to young terns.



**Figure :** A non-parent bird trying to feed a chick (top left), an adult common tern with a fish twice the length of the bill (top right), a pair of common terns displaying over Peashopper (left) and a young Herring Gull trying to steal a sandeel from a Common Tern (right).

In contrast to in previous years, on several occasions during the summer young herring and black-headed gulls were seen chasing terns trying to steal sandeels. Generally the terns were far more manoeuvrable and would keep their catch, but perseverance paid off on several occasions with the terns loosing their catch.

## Awareness Raising

A press release was carried out early in the season to coincide with the start of the breeding season, and highlighted disturbance and rare species including artic tern nesting in Scilly. This resulted in 2 newspaper articles and 3 radio interviews. A further press release again highlighting disturbance as a major issue is planned for January 2006.

Weekly updates on the tern project, the work of the IOSWT and interesting wildlife sightings around the island were given to Glenn Covell, the St. Mary's Harbour Master, for use on his Friday morning radio Cornwall slots. This information reached a number of local people and was very well received by all those that made comment.

Tern Sightings leaflets were again available around St Mary's in tourist information, the IOSWT visitors centre, and outside the Pilots Gig restaurant and approximately 500 were taken over the summer, though responses were very disappointing with just 5 completed forms received. A letter of thanks, leaflets and an IOSWT newsletter containing an article on Roseate Terns were sent to all those people who had given sighting details over the last two years. Several of these people have since gone on to become members.

A total of five free tern talks were given over the summer with one on St Mary's and one on each of the off-islands and were well received by all that attended. Over 200 people came in all, with highest at any one talk being 85 on St Martins. Local people were represented in small numbers at all talks. £150 was raised in donations from the talks and this nearly covered the cost of boat charters for the off islands talks.

<b>Island Name</b>	<b>People Attending</b>	<b>Donations Received</b>
Bryher	0	0
St Martins	85	£76.04
St Agnes	27	£19.40 + book sale £9.50
St Marys	33	£35.65
Tresco	16	£3.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>£134.49 + £9.50</b>

On 18<sup>th</sup> August Katherine Sawyer and I led a group of 12 people from the cruise ship Hebridean Spirit on an afternoon's tour of Samson and explained the work of the IOSWT on the islands. This was done in fowl weather but was well received and a donation given to the IOSWT as a result.

As usual anyone who showed an interest in the project locally I tried to keep informed about the ups and downs of the breeding season. On several occasions local people expressed their pleasure at the continuation of the project, including at least one person who did not seem very keen when I arrived in 2003.

## **Human Disturbance**

Human disturbance has become an increasingly significant problem for terns and other species in Scilly in 2005.

A total of 42 incidents between 21<sup>st</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> August were noted as being potential disturbance situations. To qualify as an incident people had to be in or near the vicinity of a tern colony and engaged in an activity that would potentially disturb the terns. Generally this would involve use of a boat, flying a kite, not keeping a dog under control, or sometimes just walking in the wrong places. If a disturbance incident could be avoided I would try to stop the person before their activity caused a problem and ask them to continue in a more suitable location. If an incident had already begun I would observe the tern's reaction and then try to speak to the person involved afterwards.

A three stage strategy was decided as the best course of action for dealing with disturbance (similar to that used successfully by the RSPB at their Hayle Estuary reserve). In the first instance a person causing disturbance should be spoken to and be made aware of the problems their actions could cause. After a repeat offence a letter from partner organisations should be sent to the individuals involved outlining the legal status of the locations and species they were noted disturbing. In the case of any other repeat offences court proceedings would be threatened. Generally people were understanding and avoided entering areas if asked. On several occasions it was not possible to talk to people as they had departed by boat.

Several incidents over the summer warrant further mention. On 8<sup>th</sup> May a botany group from Cambridge consisting of 16 people were reported as being present in the roped off area on North Hill Samson. It was discovered who was leading the group and where they were staying, and the leader was contacted and denied any wrong doing. A letter (see appendix 3) was then sent from partners outlining the designations in place on Samson and some of the legislation surrounding that. This individual has always denied any wrong doing, and has been helpful and willing to answer questions posed. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May two people who I had discussed the tern project with on the boat on the way to Samson were observed walking in the roped off area. I spoke to them afterwards and they claimed the fencing and signs were not clear. One of them fell off the boat on leaving Samson which was particularly pleasing! I have no doubt these two incidents (and perhaps others that weren't observed) played a big part in causing the prospecting terns to abandon the North Hill site.

Shrimpers were also noted as causing significant disturbance around tern colonies in June, July & August. On 7<sup>th</sup> June four shrimpers from a French Yacht moored near St Helen's spent an hour on the in coming tide around Peashopper. This caused continued disturbance for the birds that were present, but I could do nothing as I was watching from the Blockhouse on Tresco. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June three shrimpers from a French Yacht moored near Old Grimsby spent three hours around the Foreman's Island complex but avoided Peashopper once asked, though their continued presence in the area disturbed roosting and fishing terns. On 17<sup>th</sup> August the boat Blue Hunter landed seven shrimpers on Foremans Island at low tide. They then proceeded to walk around Peashopper and other adjoining small islands before I intercepted them and explained why Peashopper was closed. They remained in the area for a further hour.

On several occasions' canoes, punts and sailing boats were observed passing close inshore around tern colonies though generally the people did not land and their presence caused only minimal disruption to the birds. Perhaps more concerning was disturbance caused by the local jet-boats passing Stoney and Green Island Samson at high speeds which caused all the roosting terns and waders to flush on several occasions. Generally travelling slowly past these islands allows close views of birds and very little disturbance occurs as a result. This is the case with Will Wagstaff's Seabird Trips which generally leave birds undisturbed.



**Figure :** Three types of disturbance. A Helicopter landing on Tresco (above left), Kite surfers on Samson (above right) and canoes around Peashopper (below)

St Mary's Boatman's Association run trips most days from mid May until late August to Samson if the weather is ok for landing. Between 2 and 30 people a day, average 10. Bryher boats run trips to Samson just once a week, and then only if the weather is good. Approx 12 people per trip. Both organisations are happy to hand out leaflets. Many private boats visit Samson.

## Conclusions

The 2005 tern breeding season saw the lowest productivity in the last five years. Early season disturbance and changeable weather caused terns to shift sites and nest later than usual. They chose a previously unmanaged site where they suffered almost total predation from a pair of Greater Black-backed Gulls nesting nearby. The eggs of this pair were destroyed and this went some way to reducing the amount of predation. A smaller number of pairs bred at another rocky site where losses to high tides and an oystercatcher caused the colony to abandon. Productivity was just 0.23 chicks per pair, the lowest in the last 3 years, and well below the 0.66 suggested by the RSPB required to maintain a stable population. On a brighter note there was one confirmed sighting of a Roseate Tern during the spring that spent at least three days around the islands and visited several tern colonies.

### *Summary of Tern Pairs:*

Common Tern	- 65 pairs	- 15 young fledged
Sandwich Tern	- 1 pair	- 0 young fledged
Arctic Tern	- 1 pair	- 0 young fledged

I have some reservations as to the scaling down of the tern project within the proposed seabird strategy. While undoubtedly there is now a good deal of tern data now collected, there is still a need for regular monitoring of sites if human disturbance and predation incidents are to be spotted and addressed quickly enough to avoid having a negative impact on tern breeding success each year. I also feel that there is a need to continue to monitor the food availability, not just for terns but for all seabirds that rely heavily on sandeels as their main prey item in Scilly.

Human disturbance in and around tern sites was also noted as being at a much higher level than in previous years. It was hoped that the extensive, highly visual signs, posters, ropes and tern warden presence on Samson would ensure that the disturbance incidents experienced here in 2004 would be avoided in 2005. However, this was not the case and two incidences in May were a major reason for terns abandoning the site.

I believe the issue of disturbance needs to be addressed. An agreement between all local organisations as to which areas can be closed access during the summer and be adhered to would be very helpful. At present there appears to be some confusion and lack of information provided to the local and visiting public about exactly what the rules surrounding closures are. With an increasing number of activities taking place in Scilly each year any agreement is likely to involve a significant number of user groups. Some kind of zoning for activities at different sites may be the best way forward, though perhaps the most difficult to agree upon, and for this to occur a good deal of local discussion and agreement would be required.

Habitat work has now successfully tripled the size of tern habitat on Annet. However, the difficulty with doing the work here in April is that the site still looks rather disturbed when the terns arrive in May, but by the end of the season looks fantastic. In hindsight carrying out the work in early or late winter would give the site more time to settle down. I firmly believe the work done here will provide popular with nesting terns in the near future. There is a need for continued proactive gull nest control

Leave Stratford at Highgate House turn left towards  
Forest Square Building, Highgate, Bittern - Shrubbery -  
Leave road next to Forest Square -  
Leave road next to Forest Square -  
Leave road next to Forest Square -

## Recommendations

- Creation of any further plastic plot on Annet to be done in early/late winter. X
- Habitat improvement and placement of shelters on Peashopper. *Festuca - not necessary?*
- To continue gull nest destruction and gull deterrents around tern colony sites as a high priority job *early-mid-May*
- New signs on Samson landing beach showing paths, historical sites and bird nesting areas. Leaflet to be available on site. *Samson Building Project + Waves of Health Through Tides.*
- Continuation of background food observations
- Continued and expanded awareness raising campaign. Perhaps a letter to local businesses/organisations to make them aware of some of the problems experienced in 2003-2005?
- Continue and expand links with local organisations, the ISBG members could certainly provide more tern sightings and colony checks. *Nigel Hudson*
- Evening slide shows and talks to be continued/expanded (weekly through the main season) *Before School Sets, Author*
- Establishment of an island closures board (perhaps on Hugh Town quay?) with a map and information stating duration and reasons for island closure, as well as the legislation surrounding it. A leaflet with similar information to be distributed around the islands. *Harbourmaster - new board?*

Richard Mills Sailing School Portmeirion  
(also out of Island Hotel Tesco) - Rayaks  
Pass uninhabited islands

Which are restricted access. (map to go onto my file).

Harbour development leaflet - Harbourmaster Glen  
have a look, also talk (have) to Radio Cornwall (BBC),  
Shining - shouldn't start before 1<sup>st</sup> July, French  
get too close to Peashopper.

Peter Randall - groups inside ropes Samson.

Will Wagstaff - encourage him to National Trust.

Down shows walk Sat. - Tristan.

Joe Pauder/Alex Hicks (Kingfisher) - flags.  
(Safaris)

Flounder return  
Locate

Trust seabird sites (upset Will)

Bill Oddies fares?

## Appendix 1 - Summary of Tern Breeding Sites 2003-2005

### Annet

In 2003 the Annet site held 20 pairs of Common Tern. The colony suffered almost total predation at the egg stage, but birds re-laid and chicks were fledged from the site. The predators were thought to be lesser and greater black-backed gulls which would hide in the bracken and wait for an opportunity to steal into the site. The available habitat for nesting terns was thought to be a significant limiting factor for breeding success. The size of the colony was small and physically many more than 20 pairs of terns could not nest here. As a result it was decided in 2004 to try to increase the size of available nesting habitat. Due to problems of landing heavy machinery (ie bracken rollers) and the choice of spraying and rolling coinciding with the birds nesting season it was decided to create a trial plot using black plastic. The plastic was placed over the bracken and dug over with earth and sand with driftwood and box shelters placed for cover. The site remained deserted in 2004 but it was agreed that the trial plot looked ideal for nesting terns. In November 2004 severe winter storms inundated the site and lowered the level of the boulder bank, and deposited 20 black sacks full of rubbish in the site. This was cleared and in April 2005 another plot was created and effectively the amount of habitat available to nesting terns has tripled in size. One pair of common tern nested here in 2005 though eggs were predated early in incubation presumably by gulls. Interestingly terns have only used this site in the last three years when the tree mallow has been growing along the boulder beach. There had been some new mallow growth in 2005 but the local rabbit population removed this before it became established. Rats were successfully eradicated from Annet during the winter of 2004/5.

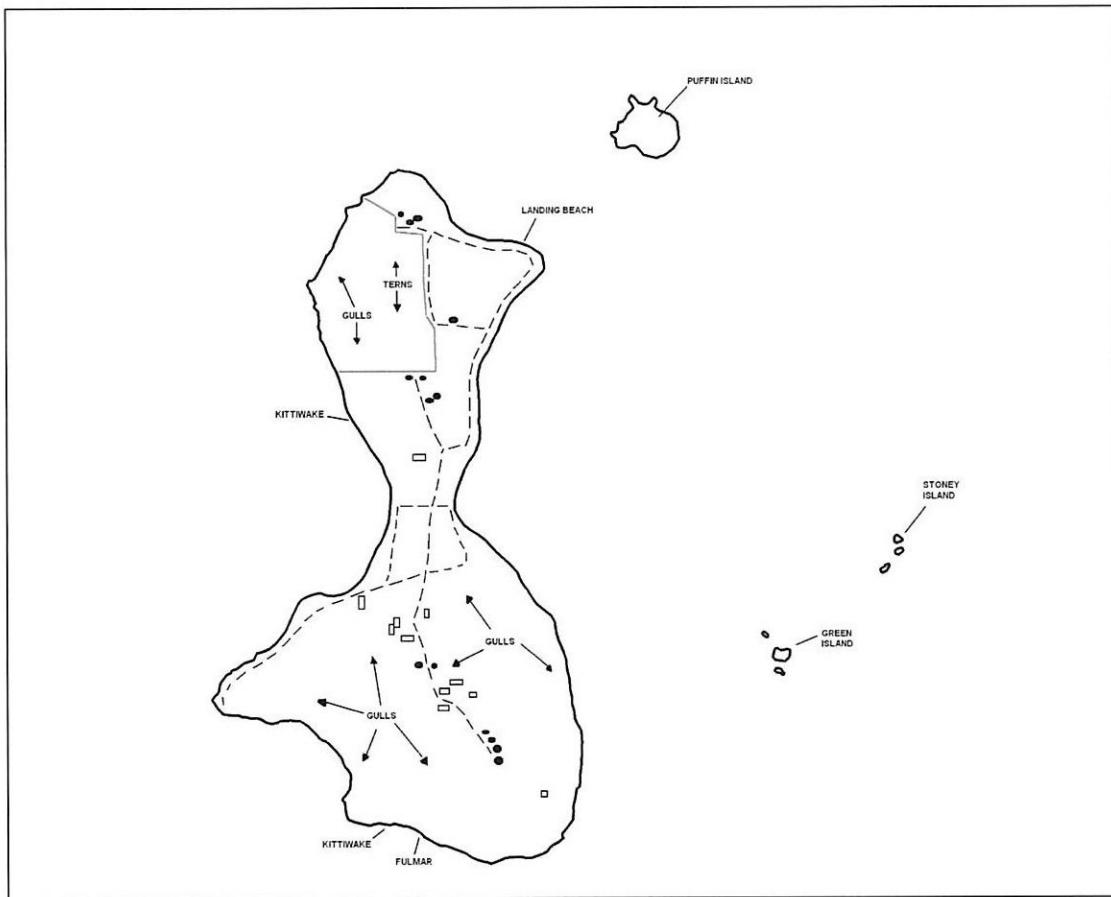
### *Future threats:*

Predation by gulls is likely to remain a problem at this site unless a larger colony is formed. Ideally a colony of over 30 pairs would stand a better chance. Rats, should they become established on the island again, are also likely to be a threat. Rabbit activity around the tern colony appears to have increased in the last 3 years with much digging in the colony area. If the presence of tree mallow is required for terns to nest here, the rabbit population may prove to be a limiting factor (though they will also help keep the site open). Human disturbance is not a great issue at the site, though local people occasionally land here to collect useful items washed up in winter storms. Further encroachment on the site by bracken is perhaps inevitable in future years, though the new plots created should go some way to alleviating the problem. These plots should last for perhaps 5 years, though small amounts of maintenance would be required each year to ensure they remain suitable for terns.

### **Samson**

North Hill Samson has historically been used by nesting Common Tern in a number of years, often for second nest attempts after the failure of breeders on offshore Green Island. From 2000-2002 Channel Seabirds Group tried to establish a Common Tern colony here using a CD lure device with dummy terns and a small number of shelter boxes. This was reasonably successful in attracting between 20 and 50 pairs to the site.

In 2003 just 7 pairs nested, and while fledging success was reasonably high, gulls nesting nearby were subjected to continued harassment by the terns during the summer and food was brought to the colony at a reduced rate compared to other sites in Scilly as terns spent less time fishing and more defending the site. It was noted that terns preferred nesting in areas of low vegetation, and in 2004 a number of small 2 or 3 foot square plots were created around the site with roseate tern design boxes placed in each plot. In 2004 a minimum of 60 pairs nested here and 28 of 30 tern shelters were used by tern chicks during the summer. Overall productivity was not as high as hoped due to an un-seasonal storm in June, which coincided with the timing of the majority of eggs hatching, as a result approximately half of those chicks that had hatched were lost to the weather. The timing of this storm was unfortunate, had it come a week earlier or later then losses would not have been as high. Disturbance events at the Appletree Banks Tresco colony had caused breeders to move sites and had held up the main breeding season by at least a week. However, overall fledging success was reasonable with at least 36 chicks fledging from the site, a productivity rate of chicks per pair. In 2005 the site held over 100 birds early in the season, but changeable weather and 2 significant human disturbance events caused birds to shift sites, and the North Hill colony had no nesting terns during the summer of 2005, though was visited by up to 20 birds at regular intervals during the season. Gull nest removal in 2004 and 2005 and gull deterrents used in 2005 ensured that no gull nested or roosted too close to the tern colony and produced higher levels of food activity for terns around the colony and reduced time spent by them mobbing gulls. An influx of Rats were successfully eradicated from Samson during the inter of 2004/5.



North Hill has no public access during the summer to protect the nesting terns. The initial roped off area appeared small and this was extended in 2004 to accommodate the larger number of nesting terns at the site. This generally proved successful in minimising human disturbance though several incidents concerning local people ensured that disturbance was still a factor. In response to this in 2005 some new paths were cut and extra signs placed around the colony to try to make it very clear which areas were closed. Despite this there were at least 3 known incidents early in the season which may have caused the terns to move sites early in 2005.

#### **Future Threats:**

Human Disturbance is perhaps the biggest factor at this site. Each year there have been a number of incidents which may have affected breeding success at critical times. Improved signage and fencing, as well as awareness raising talks on all inhabited islands, have gone some way to improving peoples awareness of disturbance. However, there is still a long way to go in changing the general attitude of locals and some visitors to Scilly who feel that they have the right to go and do what ever they like in closed areas that are important for nesting seabirds. Rats may potentially become established on Samson again in the future and could have a detrimental affect on tern breeding success, though to date no tern egg loss on Samson has been attributed to rats. Ongoing baiting/monitoring is in place for winter 2005/6. Gull nest removal and some form of deterrent needs to be continued here to ensure that terns have a large enough area to nest in away from the attentions of gulls. Suitable habitat on North Hill also needs to be maintained with cleared areas available for nesting terns. Bracken and grasses could potentially encroach onto the heathland site in the future.

### **Other Samson Sites:**

The Rocky offshore islands of Stoney and Green are important areas of tern activity. Stoney Island is used as a high tide roost site for migrant and non-breeding terns in the spring and autumn, and also by smaller numbers of off duty breeders during the summer. Green Island is also used as a high tide roost site, but has historically been used for nesting by large numbers of breeding terns. In 2003 there were at least 25 pairs here, fledging success was low. In 2004 just 2 pairs nested and failed to raise any young. In 2005 ten pairs used the site, but total failure of the colony occurred, with 3 nests lost to high tides and many of the remaining eggs predated by Oystercatchers.

This site has several important problems that limit tern breeding success. Due to its low lying nature it is affected by high tides and storms and each year a number of nests are lost to these factors. The site is bare rock, with some shelter available in rock piles but due to the lack of drainage at the site a number of areas where terns nest become flooded with rain water after heavy storms.

### **Future Threats:**

The limiting factor at the Green Island site is always likely to be the threats of high tides, big seas and storms. Unless the height of the island can be increased or the flooding problems alleviated in some way then productivity is likely to remain generally low here with perhaps occasional good years when weather is unusually settled during the summer. Oystercatchers nest and roost here each year and may be of local importance in causing reduced productivity. Human disturbance in the form of people actually walking on the island appears non-existent, though at low tide the Samson Flats are a favourite site for shrimpers, and the local launches often ply the waters between stoney and green island when tides allow. The powerboats have been noted travelling at high speed through this stretch and have flushed roosting birds at high tide.

### **Tresco** **Appletree Banks**

The Appletree Banks colony near the woodpile on Tresco's southern shores has historically been a major site for nesting Common Tern. It has also held small numbers of roseate Tern in the past. The area has been fenced in the past and this yielded some success with increased productivity as a result.

In 2003 20 pairs used the site and despite having many factors present that are deemed bad for tern productivity the site enjoyed a productivity rate of chicks per pair. Initially in 2004 the site had looked like being used by at least 25 pairs of Common Tern, but the colony deserted over the space of two days in early June with no trace of any egg or tern activity remaining. Tresco Estate suggested that crows had been to blame. In 2005 there was no nest attempts at this site, and very few birds visiting, just occasional pairs displaying.

### **Future Threats:**

In the past 3 years the woodpile has increased in size and has gradually edged nearer to the tern colony. This has also lead to increased human activity with heavy

machinery in the area. The site is also in line of the flight path for helicopters landing on Tresco if the wind direction is correct. There is currently no restricted access to the area, though the Tresco Estate are willing to fence the area if required. Tresco Estate are applying for planning permission to build a barn on or near this site in the future. If this is the case then no doubt increased disturbance or possible abandonment would occur as a result. Currently the coast path passes within 30 feet of where terns have nested and is used by many people. Rats are present on the island, as are dogs and cats all of which can cause potential failures of the colony.

### **Green/Skirt Island Area**

Skirt island of the southern shores of Tresco has historically been used by small numbers of nesting terns, and is also the last known breeding site of Roseate Tern in Scilly. It is used as a roost site by gulls, waders and terns, especially in the autumn. The Channel Seabirds Group tried to improve the site in the 1990's by adding sand and boxes to the island, this lead to increased numbers of pairs nesting here, but they suffered high levels of predation. In 2003 2 pairs nested here, but were predated early in the chick stage. In 2004 2 pairs again nested here and were predated at the egg stage. In 2005 the pair of Arctic Terns nested here, but an adult was predated by the local Peregrine. 7 pairs of late breeding Common Tern attempted to nest here but soon abandoned the site once migrant birds began to return in August. *1 Wren?*

### **Future Threats:**

The site is accessible at low tide and people regularly go to sit there for their lunch. The helicopter flight path to Tresco often passes right over the site depending on wind direction causing short term disturbance. Two pairs of Oystercatchers nest on the island. The site is very exposed with little natural shelter for chicks and is always likely to suffer from predation (including from rats) and exposure.

### **Castle Down**

The area on Castle Down close to King Charles Castle used to be one of the biggest tern colonies in Scilly. In 2003 a single pair nested here and raised 2 young. In 2004 and 2005 the site was not used. The site is now very popular with tourists and exposed in nature meaning it is unlikely that a successful large tern colony could be formed here.

### **Peashopper**

Peashopper has been the most naturally successful site for Common Tern in Scilly in the last 3 years. In 2005 the site was the main tern colony in Scilly with at least 50 apparently occupied nests, and up to 150 birds using the site. The centre of the island is heavily vegetated meaning tern nests are located on exposed rocks around the edge of the island. In 2005 a Great Black-backed Gull also nesting on the island predated around 30 chicks and overall only a disappointing 15 chicks were fledged from the site.

*7firs  
2003?  
2004?  
6att.*

### **Future Threats:**

Due to the size of the island any gull nesting on the island is likely to pose a significant threat to nesting terns. While Lesser Black-backed Gulls were not observed to take any chicks in 2005, they have the potential to do so, and they regularly are subjected to harassment and mobbing by the terns. Any gull nest on peashopper should be repeatedly destroyed until the adults stop re-nesting.

At low tides the Foreman's Island group is a popular landing site for people hiring canoes and yachts from the island hotel, and visiting yachtsmen. Shrimpers also use the site and can cause prolonged disturbance while walking the edge of the island.

## **St Martins**

### **White Island**

In 2004 2 pairs nested here, and fledged 2 chicks between them. The birds were not together. One area offers the potential as a good tern site with a mixture of large rocks and some low vegetation patches providing cover for chicks. A search on 20<sup>th</sup> June failed to find any terns.

### ***Future Threats:***

White Island is accessible on low tides and on busy days as many as 20 people have been observed visiting the island at one time. There is a Lesser Black-backed Gull colony on the island.

## **Bryher**

### **Colvel Rocks**

In 2003 1 pair of common tern nested here but the eggs were predated by crows.

### ***Future Threats:***

Like Green Island of Tresco the site is very exposed with little natural shelter for chicks and is always likely to suffer from predation and exposure. It is also accessible at low tide though few people have been observed walking out to the site.

## Appendix 2

# Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

## PRESS RELEASE - begins -

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust today announced that the Roseate Tern Species Recovery Programme had ended its third year of work in the Isles of Scilly. This programme is run as part of the National Biodiversity Action Plan to help Europe's rarest seabird, which has undergone major population declines in much of its range in recent years.

In 2005 the programme was supported by ***ACTION FOR BIRDS IN ENGLAND***, A partnership programme between English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds taking conservation action for priority bird species in England. [Note reference to English Nature will change to Natural England at some point but this would be clarified when the press release is circulated].

The tern warden, Ben Lascelles, says "The Roseate Tern was for a long time the most important breeding bird species in the Isles of Scilly, with the 6-20 pairs representing some 15% of the UK population. Unfortunately they have not bred in Scilly since 1994, and the reasons for their disappearance are unclear. They breed in association with Common Terns and these birds have been the main focus of our conservation drive"

This season saw the first spring record of a Roseate Tern in Scilly for over 5 years, with several other sightings over the summer, though no breeding was suspected. The season also saw the first breeding record of the Arctic Tern in the islands since 1977! Unfortunately the local peregrine got a taste for one of the adult birds.

Ben said "We have worked hard over the last three years to try and maximise common tern breeding success around the islands with mixed fortunes. Some of the habitat work we have done has taken a while to develop but we are hopeful that next year the areas we have created will prove a big success with the terns. The specially designed nest boxes we have made have already proved very successful in sheltering small chicks from the elements and predators."

However, human disturbance around colonies caused many problems in 2005 with birds regularly abandoning sites. Eventually they settled on a previously unused island where they suffered from predation and losses to high tides. As a result this year they managed to only fledge 15 chicks from 65 pairs, the worse productivity for 5 years. People are urged to be aware of their affect on wildlife when visiting Scilly and avoid disturbing nesting seabirds. If people want to get close views of seabirds they should contact the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, who will be able to advise them as to the best sites to visit. Call 01720 422153 or visit our website [www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk)

## Appendix 3

# Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

## DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release: date xx 2006**

### *Your tern to make a difference*

#### **Charity appeals for support in protecting breeding birds**

Human activity is threatening the future prospects of a species of seabird on the Isles of Scilly – and a conservation charity is calling for the support of local tourism businesses to raise awareness of the problem.

Common terns are the focus of a major ‘conservation drive’ by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, but human disturbance last summer regularly resulted in the birds abandoning their

nest sites.

Tern warden Ben Lascelles said: ‘Last year only 15 common tern chicks successfully left the nest – and that’s from 65 pairs of the bird. It is the worst breeding season for five years. The problem was that after being disturbed the terns moved to an island they hadn’t used before and lost chicks to predators and high tides.’

He added: ‘We’re urging people involved in the tourism industry to help us make people aware of their effect on wildlife when visiting Scilly and avoid disturbing nesting seabirds. If people want to get close views of the birds they should contact us and we’ll advise them on to the best sites to visit. ’

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust’s Roseate Tern Species Recovery Programme is now in its fourth year. Supported by Action For Birds In England, a partnership between English Nature and the RSPB, it is aimed at helping Europe’s rarest seabird, which has undergone major population declines in recent years in most of the places it is found.

Because terns are social birds, often nesting in mixed colonies, the fortunes of one species often impact on another, hence the concern for common terns. By maintaining

and improving sites where the common terns nest it is hoped that other species of tern will also be encouraged to breed on the islands.

RSPB Conservation Officer, Paul St Pierre said: 'The roseate tern was for a long time the most important breeding bird species in the Isles of Scilly, with between six and 20 pairs representing some 15% of the UK population.

'Unfortunately, they have not bred in Scilly since 1994, but the reasons for their disappearance are unclear. We hope that if the common terns are successful then the roseates may also return to breed.'

Specially designed nest boxes, installed as part of work to provide more tern-friendly breeding areas, have already proved successful in sheltering small chicks from the elements and predators. It is hoped that this, along with the fact that last year a roseate tern was seen in Scilly for the first time in five years might make 2006 a good year for terns.

- People interested in getting close views of seabirds should contact the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust on 01720 422153, for advice on the best sites to visit. Or click on [www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk)

ENDS

**For further information or to arrange an interview contact Ben Lascelles, The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust tern warden on 01720 422153 or Sophie Atherton, RSPB South West media officer on 01392 453 753.**

## **Editors' notes**

1. The Wildlife Trusts is a partnership of 47 Wildlife Trusts, across the UK, caring for more than 2,400 nature reserves. The partnership campaigns for the protection of wildlife and invests in the future by helping people of all ages to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of nature. The Wildlife Trusts have a membership of over 355,000 people. Further information can be found at: [www.wildlifetrust.org](http://www.wildlifetrust.org)
2. The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust was formerly known as the Isles of Scilly Environmental Trust founded in 1986. It works to protect and maintain the unique and fragile beauty of Scilly. Its primary commitment is the conservation of terrestrial and to manage wildlife and their habitats, the landscape, archaeological and historical remains of the islands. Further information can be found at: [www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk)
3. In 2005 the Roseate Tern Species Recovery Programme was supported by *Action For Birds In England*, a partnership between English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds taking conservation action for priority bird species in England.

#### **Appendix 4 – Letter to people involved in disturbance**

Address

Date

Dear Name,

Following our conversation during your spring trip to the Isles of Scilly in May 2005 I have been asked to write to you by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and English Nature. I understand that you are a regular visitor to the islands and bring groups each spring. I also understand that one of the islands you often visit on your tours is Samson. As you are probably aware Samson is managed by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. We work hard to maintain its SSSI status for plants and seabirds, and also to ensure that people and wildlife can share the island in harmony. We have had several unfortunate incidents this year regarding disturbance of seabirds on Samson and other islands. This can be particularly detrimental to seabird breeding success when birds are away from nests for extended periods and chicks and eggs are vulnerable to exposure and predation. In an attempt to minimise this we feel it is necessary to close certain islands either all year or for the summer during the birds breeding season. Due to the potential seriousness of this issue, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has added further protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, like Samson, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any of the designated features within a particular SSSI. Over the last few years, we have been working very hard to try and inform both islanders and visitors of the importance of Samson as a SSSI and its legal status.

We ask tour groups (especially those related to wildlife) to let us know when they intend to visit off-islands managed by the Wildlife Trust so that we can grant permission for access to restricted areas if requested, and send staff members or volunteers to assist in the unique Scilly experience if required. We also ask these groups to submit their findings (of birds, plants and any other species of interest) after the trip so that we can update our understanding of species distribution around the islands. At present there is a great deal of information that gets lost when tourists leave the islands and we are working hard to address this.

Thanks in advance for your understanding in this matter. If you have any queries regarding the work of the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and which islands and areas are closed each year please do not hesitate to get in touch. Hope to see your groups in Scilly in coming years.

Yours sincerely,

*Seabird Warden*

## Appendix 5 – Disturbance Incidents in 2005

			No.			Terns
Date	Location	Nature	pax	Boat	Details	Disturbed?
21-Apr	Samson	day trippers	4	SMBA		
21-Apr	Samson	Kite Surfer	1	Miss Behavin	Surfing PI, SI, GI area	yes
05-May	Samson	?	2	Grandad's Boat		no
05-May	Samson	?	1	tresco harbour Master		no
08-May	Samson	botany	16	SMBA	Roland Randall group	yes?
10-May	Samson	day trippers	4	SMBA		no
18-May	Samson	day trippers	20	SMBA		no
23-May	Samson	day trippers	7	Seahorse		no
23-May	Samson	day trippers	14	Firethorn		no
23-May	Samson	day trippers	1	Seahorse	walking around in tern colony.	yes
30-May	Samson	day trippers	c35	SMBA		no
03-Jun	Samson	day trippers	7	SMBA	also 1 dog	no
03-Jun	Samson	day trippers	4	punt	from Bryher	no
06-Jun	Samson	day trippers	10	Firethorn		no
07-Jun	Peashopper	shrimper	4	french yacht	present for 1/2 hr	yes
07-Jun	Peashopper	moored	?	cornishcruising.com		no
15-Jun	Green island	boat	?	Cyclone	flushed all birds from island	yes
22-Jun	Samson	day trippers	c20	SMBA		no
22-Jun	Samson	shrimper	3	punt	on Samson flats	yes
22-Jun	Green island	?	2	punt	comes between Stoney & green	no
23-Jun	Peashopper	holiday	1	canoist	from island hotel passes near	no
23-Jun	Peashopper	shrimper	3	French yacht	present for 2.5 hrs	yes
23-Jun	Peashopper	TV	?	WW.G-PIX.TV	helicopter flew low over site	yes
27-Jun	Samson	day trippers	10	Firethorn	2 reported with tents by KS	no
27-Jun	Samson	day trippers	2	?	dog walker scaring gulls and waders	yes
27-Jun	Samson	day trippers	2	?	Flying large red kite on North beach	no
27-Jun	Samson	?	3	?	kite surfers around north landing beach	no
08-Jul	Peashopper	day trippers	2	small yacht	sat on Foreman's under umbrellas	no
12-Jul	Samson	day trippers	4	SMBA		no
12-Jul	Samson	day trippers	7	Cyclone		no
12-Jul	Samson	day trippers	3	private boat		no
12-Jul	Samson	day trippers	3	private boat		no
12-Jul	Samson	day trippers	28	-	on beach, 2 yacht & 6 punts	no
13-Jul	Peashopper	day trippers	2	canoe	stayed safe distance from island	no
13-Jul	Peashopper	transit	3	motor boat	passes nearby and all dread	yes
13-Jul	Peashopper	day trippers	2	canoe	by small rock with nest	yes
17-Jul	Norwethel	day trippers	2	?	dog chasing gulls	no
19-Jul	Samson	school trip	150+	SMBA	Samson Picnic	?
19-Jul	Skirt Island	boat	?	Lightning	flush all terns as pass nearby	yes
17-Aug	Peashopper	day trippers	7	Blue Hunter	shrimpers	yes