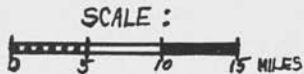


del. JR

**MAJOR
TERN COLONIES
IN MASSACHUSETTS
(SOUTH)**



KEY:

C = COMMON	} TERNS
A = ARCTIC	
R = ROSEATE	
L = LEAST	

WHERE TO SEE TERNS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Four species of tern - Arctic, Common, Least, and Roseate - breed in eastern Massachusetts. The bulk of these nest on the sandy beaches, barrier islands, and sparsely vegetated dunes of the southeast coastal plain, the Cape, and the Islands. Much smaller numbers are found breeding in Boston and Essex County.

Tern breeding colonies are quite fragile. Massachusetts' tern colonies are in decline, due primarily to human pressure. Such pressure comes directly in the form of foot and vehicular traffic through or near the tern colonies, and from unleashed pet dogs. Increased numbers of gulls, rats, and foxes, whose presence is directly related to human influence, cut into the nesting territories and breeding success of the tern population. In many cases, the beleaguered birds have moved to offshore islands or other areas which are virtually inaccessible because of surrounding marshlands. In some other instances, the birds have consolidated their colonies, with potentially disastrous consequences as Dennis Minsky notes in his article. Finally, the birds are victims of natural phenomena, such as the storm tide of the spring of 1979 which wiped out the Least Tern breeding colony on Plum Island.

The accompanying maps, based on Coastal Waterbird Colonies (1979) and Coastal Waterbird Colonies, An Atlas (1979) published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, depict the major nesting areas of our four breeding tern species.

It is not our intent to promote human disturbance of these colonies. If you decide to visit a tern breeding site, we ask you to heed all posted warnings and to stay well away from the nest sites. For example, if you visit Plymouth Beach, where access is relatively easy and all four Massachusetts breeding terns may be found, please stay away from the fenced area at the tip of the beach, which is the nesting area for the three larger species. If you wish to observe terns, study those resting on the exposed lower beach.

As the breeding season draws to a close, it is easier to observe terns without potentially detrimental consequences. Flocks of terns begin to congregate at various resting and feeding areas. Adults will often have young in tow, begging for food. Black, Caspian, Forsters, Gull-billed, Royal and Sandwich Terns may be found mixing with the commoner local species (see Nikula, in this issue). Some of the best sites for observing post-breeding tern activity are:

- NORTH SHORE: Newburyport Harbor, the Plum Island Impoundments, and Crane's Beach (Ipswich)
- BOSTON: Revere Beach and Squantum
- SOUTH SHORE: Plymouth and Duxbury Beaches
- CAPE COD: Virtually the entire Outer Beach. Provincetown's Race Point and Herring Cove Beaches, and Monomoy Island are particularly recommended.
- NANTUCKET: Jetties Beach, Eel Point and Sesachacha Pond