

Roseate Tern

Rooiborsseeswael

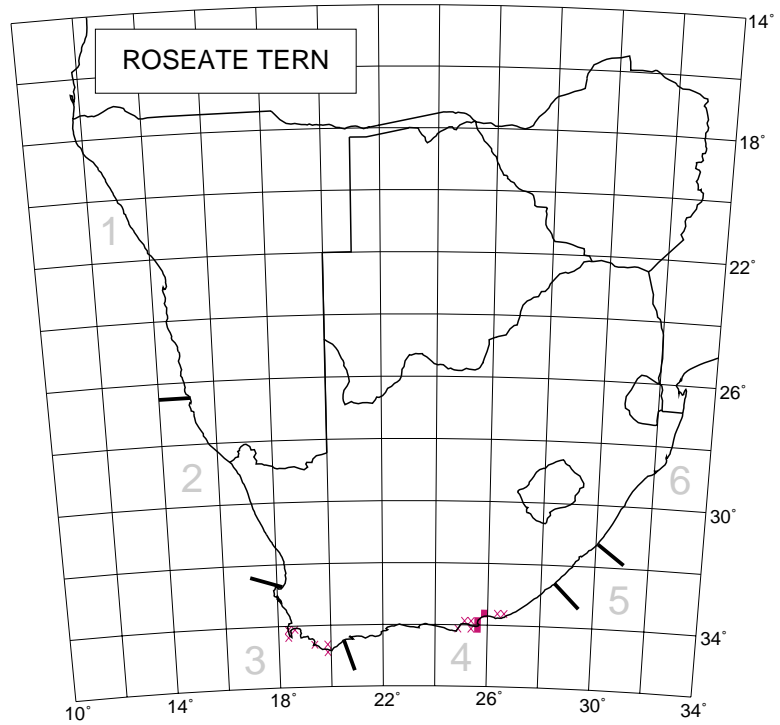
Sterna dougallii

The Roseate Tern breeds along the eastern and western coasts of the North Atlantic Ocean and in the central western Pacific and Indian oceans, the world population being about 30 000 pairs (Croxall *et al.* 1984; Croxall 1991). Some 12 500 pairs breed off eastern Africa, including Madagascar (Cooper *et al.* 1984).

During the atlas period, the only breeding sites were at Bird (3326CD) and St Croix (3325DD) islands in Algoa Bay where 130–140 pairs breed (Randall *et al.* 1991). It is nomadic between different sites if disturbed by people (N.W.T. Klages *in litt.*). It formerly also bred at Cape Recife (3425BA) in Algoa Bay (Randall & Randall 1980). The atlas data confirm its presence in the Algoa Bay region. There are a few earlier records from KwaZulu-Natal (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Maclean 1985c), but it was not seen there during the atlas period. The nearest presumed extant breeding colony, north of Algoa Bay, is off southwestern Madagascar where there were *c.* 4000 pairs in 1948 (Milon 1950).

At Dyer Island (3419CB), breeding was last observed in 1971 with no subsequent records in this area (Randall *et al.* 1991) until 1982–86, when the species was recorded in four grid cells, including Dyer Island, in the southwestern Cape Province during the breeding season (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Two were seen and heard calling at Dyer Island in August 1991; 21 were present there, including one seen incubating, in July 1996 (B.M. Dyer *in litt.*). The Roseate Tern has thus returned to breed on Dyer Island after *c.* 25 years.

Breeding in South Africa is May–October, after which most leave Algoa Bay (Randall *et al.* 1991) to wander widely (Maclean 1985c). The Roseate Tern is one of five species in South Africa listed as ‘endangered’ (Brooke 1984b). The world population is believed to be decreasing (Rose & Scott 1994). Cessation of breeding at Cape Recife was attributed to human disturbance and predators, especially Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* (Randall & Randall 1980). At Dyer Island,



Recorded in 11 grid cells, 0.2%
 Total number of records: 60
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.2%

breeding birds may have been disturbed by guano scraping (Brooke 1984b) which ceased in 1985 (pers. obs). Breeding colonies are particularly vulnerable to disturbance and it is imperative to keep people and predators outside of colonies in Algoa Bay (Brooke 1984b).

R.J.M. Crawford

