

Update by Dr. Archer Larned, Coastal Bird Habitat Conservation Coordinator
Photos by Kim Aplanalp, Field Assistant

We are up to 149 Common Tern nests as of last week! Of those about 45 are still actively incubating eggs or have newly hatched chicks. We are confident that we will pass 150 nests since new scrapes were visible last week. We have also banded 70 adults (compared to 19 last year) and 118 chicks.

We are also happy to report that the American Oystercatcher chick has fledged and left the raft! We had been seeing it flying around the raft and making forays away from the raft and as of last Friday it flew off into the wide world.

With all the chicks on the raft getting bigger and bigger, we also added a ramp to the side of the raft for chicks that are able to fly off the raft but may have difficulty flying back on. The "life raft", the wooden pallet that was anchored off the main raft for young terns to rest on is also being used by both fledglings and adults. We will have photos of the ramp and the "life raft" in the next update.



The chicks start out fluffy and cute but grow quickly on their all-fish diet. Below is an example of chicks between 1-3 days old. They usually stay in the scrape nest for the first day or two but leave shortly after to seek shade and protection under a chick shelter or one of the fake plants we put out.

By day 5 they lose their egg tooth (the little white calcium deposit on the tip of their bill that helps them crack out of the shell), and between day 5-7 they start to get pin feathers on their wings





At day 10 their chin lightens from black to tan, their feathers start breaking through the pins, but they still have some down on the head.



At 12-15 days old the wings and back are feathered with brown and gray feathers. The head still has a little fuzz on it, and they can run very fast. By 15-20 days old black feathers on the head are visible as is a black bar on the wings.



And here is a fully fledged and flying chick! Note the rounded wingtips, which is a good way to differentiate them from the adults flying around with very pointed wingtips

