

# Little terns: conservation

## My little tern workbook, year 3 and 4

### Lesson 3 – Conservation of the little tern

Since the 1980s, the population of little terns in Britain has declined by 50% due to the development of coastal breeding habitat, human disturbance and high levels of predation. Consequently, many colonies are extensively managed in order to protect little tern numbers across Britain.

Gronant is the only breeding colony of little tern in Wales. Due to hard work by wardens and local volunteers, it has become one of the most successful colonies in the British Isles. Denbighshire Countryside Services, along with the help of dedicated volunteers and bird specialists, construct the protective fencing around the colony, warden the site every day, scare away predators and keep disturbance levels down, talk to visitors and beach users, and ring and monitor the birds to keep a track of what's going on.

### Introduction to the conservation of the little tern

Watch this video about the conservation of the little tern at Gronant:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQsbVvOBNBY>

### Introduction to the little tern animation

Find out all about the little tern at Gronant:

<http://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk/>

### Breeding animation

Learn about the conservation of the little tern at Gronant:

<http://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk/>

### Glossary of helpful words

1	Conservation	The act of protecting and preserving animals, plants and their habitats from extinction and destruction.
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2	Conservationist	Somebody who works to conserve wildlife and the environment.
3	Habitat	The natural home of an animal or plant.
4	Colony	A number of birds of the same species that nest or roost in the same site.
5	Extinct	When a species of plant or animal no longer exists on the Earth.
6	Endangered species	When a species is likely to become extinct.

## **Top Fact: We encourage visitors to volunteer and become conservationists**

### **Conservation of the little tern**

While your teacher shows you a power point presentation about conservation of little terns have a think about the following points:

- Why is conservation so important?
- What do conservationists do to protect little terns?
- What can we do to help protect little terns?

Write notes of anything you think might be important.

### **Powerpoint slides**

Here are the slides from the powerpoint that you can use to find information for your activities.

### **Conservation**

Is the act of protecting and preserving animals, plants and their habitats from extinction and destruction.

The warden and volunteer conservationists at Gronant dunes protect the terns from...

### **Climate change**

- Rising seas
- Increased storm events
- Coastal flooding and high winds can blow sand and bury eggs and young chicks.

### **Disturbance**

- Adult little terns leave the chick if they are disturbed. An example of this is people walking their dogs near the nests.

### **Predation**

Predators like:

- Red fox
- Kestrel
- Herring gull
- Stoat
- Crow
- Weasel
- Peregrine falcon
- Badger

### **Why is it important to protect the little tern?**

The little tern is one of the UK's rarest seabirds. Human disturbance, predation and climate change have threatened the numbers of the little terns.

If the little tern is not protected they may become an **endangered species**.

People have an opportunity at Gronant to protect the little terns and increase the numbers in the colony, so they don't become **extinct**.

### **Conservation**

These are some of the ways conservationists protect little terns:

Nest moving

Little terns build their nests on shingle beaches. During bad weather and rising tides, nests, eggs, chicks and adults are at risk from flooding.

Conservationists lift the nests up and put them on plant pots to stop the nests being washed away. They only do this when they absolutely have to. This gives the birds a better chance of survival.

**Please don't try and move nests yourself.**

### **Protecting from predation**

Eggs, chicks and fledglings are at risk from predation. Adults can fend off predators.

Predation from the land and sky are ongoing threats to little terns. Foxes can take a whole nest of eggs at one go, eating the fledglings!

Conservationists warden the site in daylight hours to keep away daytime predators.

They build pens and put up electric fencing to keep nocturnal predators like the red fox and badgers away from the nests.

### **Predation from the sky**

Wardens and volunteers employ scare tactics by using a starter pistol and chasing away avian predators.

A feeding station had been installed and baited with poultry chicks so predators will take those instead of the little terns. This has been successful as predators, mainly kestrels, are taking fewer little terns.

### **Laser hazing**

Conservationists use a clever laser device that scares away predators like crows and kestrels.

The birds don't like the light from the laser and when it is used repeatedly they don't come back to the site.

### **Visitor management**

Conservationists put a blue rope around the little terns' breeding grounds so people know that they and their dogs should stay away and not disturb the birds.

The wardens also spend all day at the colony keeping a watchful eye and speaking to anyone who comes too close to make sure they are aware and keep a safe distance.

They put up signs to give visitors information about the little terns and viewing areas.

The viewing area enables people to see, appreciate and learn about the little terns without disturbing them.

They can also learn about other rare and common coastal plants and animals.

People are encouraged to volunteer to help protect the little terns, becoming conservationists themselves.

## **Ringing**

Ringing is an important part of the research about and conservation of the little tern.

Rings are carefully attached to the feet of both chicks and adult birds.

When the ringed birds are caught again, the information on the rings is recorded.

Over time, this information helps conservationists to track where the birds go on migration, where they nest and find out how old the birds are.

An important part of conservation is to make other people aware of the work being done to conserve the little tern.

This is where you come in!

1. Write a letter to your local newspaper telling them why it is important to protect little terns.
2. What is already being done by conservationists at Gronant dunes to protect little terns? Describe at least 3 things.
3. Explain in your letter what people can do to learn about and help conserve the little tern. (See this slide show for help)

## **Activity 1 – Write a letter to a newspaper editor**

Your task is to take all the knowledge you have gained from the powerpoint and write a letter to a newspaper editor. To start, get into groups of four and talk about:

- Why conservation is so important?
- What conservationists do to protect little terns?
- What we can do to help protect little terns?

Write down notes about what your group think.

Using your discussion and notes, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper telling them:

- 1. Why it is important to protect the little tern?**
- 2. What things are already being done by conservationists at Gronant dunes to protect the little tern?** Describe at least 3 things that are being done.
- 3. Explain in your letter what people can do to learn about and help conserve the little tern.** (See slide 7 if you need help)

If there is time, your teacher may ask you to share your work with the rest of the class.

**Top Fact: We ring the birds so we can see which ones come back**

### **Activity 2 – Design a poster**

Work either on your own or in pairs to design a poster for your classroom or school. The poster should raise awareness and promote the conservation of the little tern at Gronant dunes. Points to consider:

#### **1. What is your headline message?**

This should be the main message of the poster: a clear, short message to tell people what you want them to know about the conservation of the little tern.

#### **2. What other important main messages do you want to tell people?**

Keep it to just two or three short, clear points. Keep it simple!

#### **3. What is the main image?**

It needs to be eye catching and powerful, so people look at your poster.

Here are some example posters. You could research conservation posters online to get other ideas. When you have finished show your poster to the class and show your article and talk about them both.

### **Extra activity – film making activity**

1. Your teacher might ask you to make a film or news report too! If you make a film follow these steps:
2. Get into groups of four and decide upon roles for yourselves. You might want to be a director, camera person, actor/presenter or a technician/editor.
3. You can use digital flip cameras and iMovie, Windows Movie Maker or any other digital filming equipment and editing packages that the school uses.

Your film will include you reading your articles and showing and explaining your posters.

4. The group should discuss and write down a short running order of who will do what and in what order.
5. If you are using a green screen don't forget not to wear green on the day of the activity, otherwise parts of you will disappear!
6. You can make your green screen out of green fabric.
7. Decide what image to use as your backdrop. This could be a newsroom studio, the beach at Gronant or your poster image.
8. You can use props and costumes to dress as newsreaders, broadcasters or TV presenters.
9. Make sure you rehearse your film before filming.
10. Once you have finished filming you can begin the editing process.
11. To edit the films plug the camera into the PC and upload/import the movies.
12. Upload your chosen background onto the edit timeline.
13. The final films can be shown in your class or at assembly.

**Top Fact: Electric fences help keep the little terns safe**

## Well done

Visit our website at [littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk](http://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk) to find out more about the little terns at Gronant.

These lesson plans were created for Denbighshire Countryside Services by Splinter.co.uk, for the Well Connected project and funded by the Welsh Government.