Forster's Tern
Sterna forsteri

Habitat Preference: Large prairie wetland complexes. Nests are built on muskrat houses, floating cattail rootstocks, or on piles of floating vegetation.

Threats:
- Loss of wetland habitat
  - Many natural wetlands have been drained throughout Iowa and specifically in the Prairie Pothole Region for agricultural practices.
- Inappropriate wetland restoration
  - Recent restorations seem to favor cattails and other emergent vegetation. This type of restoration will not be used by Forster's Terns.
  - Forster's Terns do not seem to use areas that have regular water level manipulations due to the emergent vegetation that results.
  - Many basins that have been restored are too small to be used by Forster's Tern. They use areas of greater than 20 hectares (54 acres) of restored basins.
- Age of restored wetlands may be a significant factor
  - Forster's Terns are a late succesional wetland species. Newly restored wetlands do not attract Forster's Terns.

Practice Guidelines:
- Restore Wetlands:
  - Important to restore natural wetland areas.
  - These areas need to have a considerable amount of open water. Forster's terns prefer wetlands with relatively equal components of open water and emergent vegetation, with the emergent vegetation interspersed throughout the open water.
  - Keep adequate stable water levels through the nesting season.
  - Restored wetlands should be greater than 20 hectares (54 acres).
- Control monotypic stands of cattails
  - Forster's terns prefer not to use wetlands with dense stands of cattails.
  - These stands can be controlled with herbicide, removal of cattails, and with muskrat populations.
- Manage for tern nest sites
  - Dead floating cattail mats are attractive tern nest sites, as are old muskrat houses. When other nest sites are lacking, artificial nesting structures can be used with some success.
- Preserve existing wetlands
  - Forster's Terns seem to prefer to nest in a natural occurring wetland rather than a restored wetland.