



TWICE AS MANY PUFFINS NEST AT SEAL ISLAND NWR

The number of nesting pairs of puffins at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) increased from seven in 1992 to 15 in the summer of 1993.

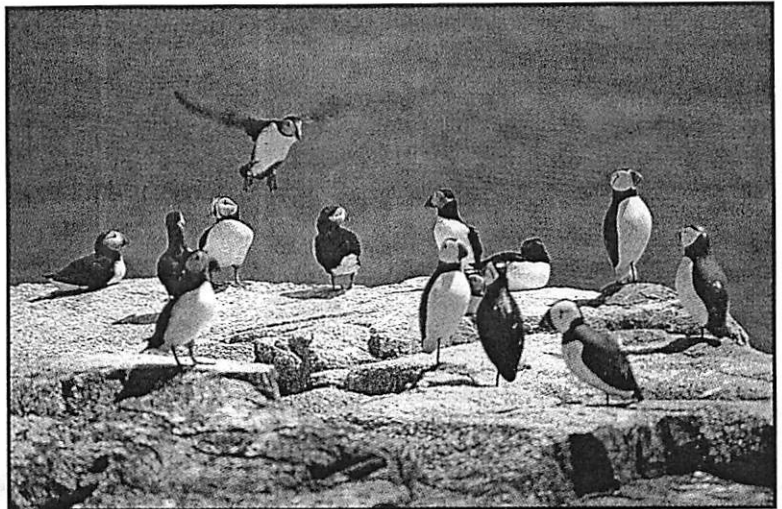
The restoration of puffins to Seal Island in 1992 was the culmination of a nine-year cooperative effort between the National Audubon Society, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Canadian Wildlife Service (see *Egg Rock Update 1992*). Seal Island had once been home to the largest puffin nesting colony off mid-coast Maine, but the birds were extirpated in 1887 by fishermen who captured nesting birds for food and bait.

Audubon staff translocated 950 puffin chicks from Great Island, Newfoundland to Seal Island between 1984 and 1989, moving as many as 200 chicks each year. During this period, 912 chicks fledged. To date, 153 of them have returned to Seal Island or one of the other Gulf of Maine puffin colonies.

In 1992, seven nesting pairs crowded into one small section of Seal Island's vast area of suitable habitat. All nests located in 1992 were again active in 1993, plus, eight new nests were discovered—all on the northern end of the island where the translocated birds were reared.

Of the 30 puffins nesting at Seal Island this year, 19 were translocated as chicks, whereas 11 were "local" birds that joined the colony from elsewhere. Matinicus Rock is the most likely source for these "mystery" birds since it is located just six miles south of Seal Island NWR. In fact, one of the 11 non-transplanted nesting puffins is a known Matinicus Rock native—recognized by the blue leg band that it received as a chick. In addition, 10 Matinicus Rock native puffins were also sighted at Seal Island NWR this summer. Machias Seal Island, located approximately 75 miles east of Seal Island NWR is the other likely source for immigrating puffins—eight Machias Seal Island puffins were identified at Seal Island NWR by their unique green bands.

We also calculated the ratio of banded-to-unbanded individuals by counting groups of puffins resting at favored "loafing ledges." In 1993, as many as 41 puffins were seen at once. Fifty counts over the course of the summer showed nearly equal numbers of banded and unbanded puffins! This is good news



Banded and unbanded puffins with decoys at Seal Island NWR. How many puffins can you find?

Stephen W. Kress

for the Seal Island colony—apparently, many native puffins are now discovering this long-abandoned habitat. It is likely that the transplanted puffins from Newfoundland are serving as living decoys that are helping to lure native Maine puffins to Seal Island NWR. ■



Chris Hewson (left) and Susan Schubel band the 37th native puffin chick at Matinicus Rock, the largest group banded to date. The Matinicus Rock puffins are thriving, as evidenced by expansion to new parts of the island and this year's record-high count of 115 active nests.

Stephen W. Kress

MORE MURRES ON MATINICUS ROCK

In 1993, the second year of the Matinicus Rock Common Murre colonization project, the high count of murres seen at one time reached 24 birds, a six-fold increase over the 1992 high count.

Murres belong to the same family as puffins and auks. Because they usually nest above ground, they were among the first of Maine's seabirds to disappear during the days of egg-ing and market-hunting. Murres last nested in Maine in 1840.

Murre restoration began at Matinicus Rock in mid-May, 1992 (see *Egg Rock Update 1992*) when, to attract murres, we played recordings near a group of 15 life-size wooden decoys that were secured to a steep cliff on the ocean-facing side of the island. The results of the 1992 summer were encouraging, but they pale compared to the activity seen on the same cliff this past summer.

This year we added 30 decoys and set them in two adjoining clusters at the same decoy site used in 1992. We positioned one speaker between the two groups and set a second speaker approximately 15 meters away from the decoys on a similar rock ledge. Within one of the decoy groups we also secured 12 ceramic, hand-painted murre eggs to the rocks.

We played three different recordings: sounds of a large colony, sounds of a few adults, and sounds of adults with chicks. The recordings were produced on compact disc at the Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. We played the sounds in sequence 24 hours a day; during daylight hours observers noted the behavior and location of visiting murres.

In 1993 murres arrived earlier and stayed later in the season than in 1992. Nearly all sightings occurred in the decoy-plus-egg group.

While the decoy groupings were alive with action from mid-May through June, the lone speaker without decoys received little attention—only two murres wandered by it all summer. In contrast, murres were observed among the decoys nearly every day (38 of 40 days) between May 16 and June 28.

We observed many courtship behaviors, especially billing (a pair touching bills) and allopreening (a pair preening each other's neck and back feathers). Copula-

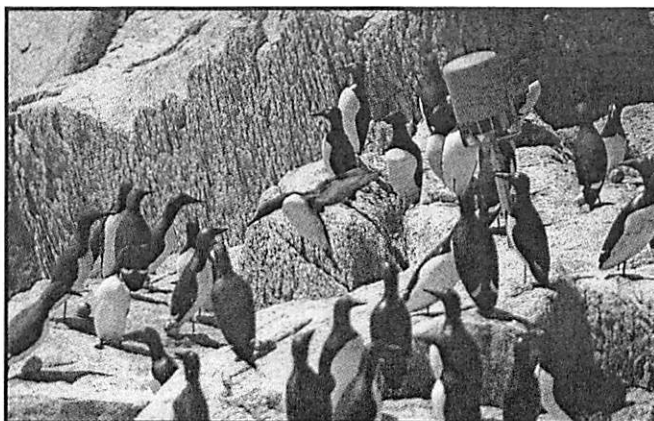
tions and parading (a behavior in which the pair strut side by side) were common. We also observed pebble and fish displays in which one bird passed a stone or fish to its potential mate. At least three pairs were observed throughout most of May and June.

Chick call recordings elicited some of the most interesting behaviors. Often when the chick calls were heard, murres would walk to the artificial eggs, peck at them or sit on them!

The only known breeding colony of Common Murres in the Gulf of Maine is on Yellow Murre Ledge, a tiny rock outcropping located just south of Grand Manan Island (see map at right). The size of this colony is estimated to be between 113 and 150 pairs—as counted this

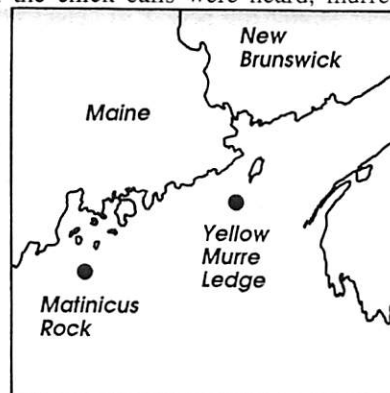
summer by Peter Duley from the National Audubon Society and Nat Wheelwright from Bowdoin College—but nesting places on the tiny island seem crowded and space is very limited. Since there are no other colonies within 1,000 miles of Matinicus Rock, Yellow Murre Ledge is the likely source for the murres that are prospecting at Matinicus Rock.

No eggs were laid by prospecting murres on Matinicus Rock this summer, but the longer period of attendance at the colony, greater number of birds, and increased frequency of courtship displays are all behaviors that precede nesting. These activities suggest that some of the murres that visited this summer are developing attachments to Matinicus Rock—and may return to breed.



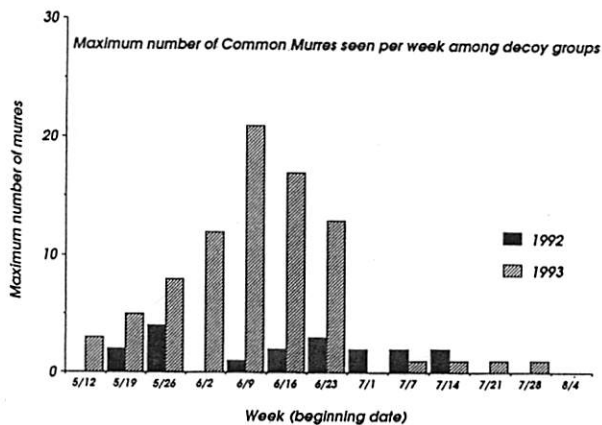
Common Murres crowded among 46 decoys at Matinicus Rock this summer, favoring the decoy set that contained artificial eggs.

Wendy Thomlinson



Yellow Murre Ledge is the only known breeding colony of Common Murres in the Gulf of Maine.

James D. Lowe



Susan Schubel

Compared to 1992, murres arrived earlier and stayed later at Matinicus Rock in 1993. By mid-June, there were six times as many murres visiting the island as in 1992.

ROSEATE TERN UPDATE

The Roseate Tern population at Eastern Egg Rock continued a seven-year upward trend as the number of nesting pairs reached a record high of 59.

The northeastern United States population of Roseate Terns was federally listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on November 2, 1987. This population fluctuates between 2,500 and 3,600 pairs nesting on about 20 islands from New York to Maine. Approximately 83% of the population nests on just two islands—Bird Island, Massachusetts and Great Gull Island, New York.

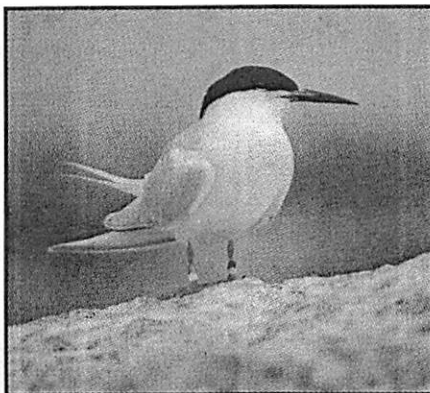
Eastern Egg Rock was the first Maine Coast colony to have an active tern restoration program. Approximately 1,000 Arctic and Common Terns nested at Egg Rock in 1880, but these were hunted for feathers until most were gone by 1900. After the terns received protection from feather hunting in the early 1900s, their numbers had jumped to several hundred pairs by 1914, but soon declined as Herring Gull numbers increased—a response to new food sources provided by coastal and inshore garbage dumps. By 1936, only a few pairs of terns remained at Egg Rock.

The first phase of the tern restoration program at Eastern Egg Rock involved removal of the nesting gull population. Gulls nest earlier than the migratory terns and eventually exclude terns by competing for nesting habitat and preying on tern eggs and chicks. To give terns and puffins a chance to reclaim Egg Rock as a nesting island, a total of 100 Great Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls were removed between 1974 and 1977. Since 1977 only egg removal has been necessary to discourage gulls from reclaiming the island.

Although most gulls were gone by 1977, terns continued to fly past Egg Rock on their way to other nesting colonies. In 1978, we started the second phase of the tern attraction program by placing 33 life-sized Arctic Tern decoys in suitable habitat. We also played tern courtship calls and colony sounds. This was the first use of decoys and tape-recordings anywhere for starting a seabird colony. The technique has since been used for a great variety of seabirds.

Although we saw many courtship displays among the decoys in 1978 and 1979, the first breeding did not occur until July 1980 when 32 pairs of Common and Arctic Terns nested among the decoys. One pair of Roseate Terns prospected among the Common Terns in 1980 and the first nesting occurred the following year. The number of terns rose dramatically through 1983, when 597 pairs of Common Terns and five pairs of Roseates nested. Even larger numbers were anticipated in 1984, but that summer we were met by a grim scene of dead and dying terns, gulls, and eiders—avian cholera had devastated the Egg Rock tern colony and dispersed the survivors.

However, good often comes from misfortune. In the same year, the College of the Atlantic had started a tern restoration project on Petit Manan Island NWR. Petit Manan Island is located approximately 73 miles east of Egg Rock. It had



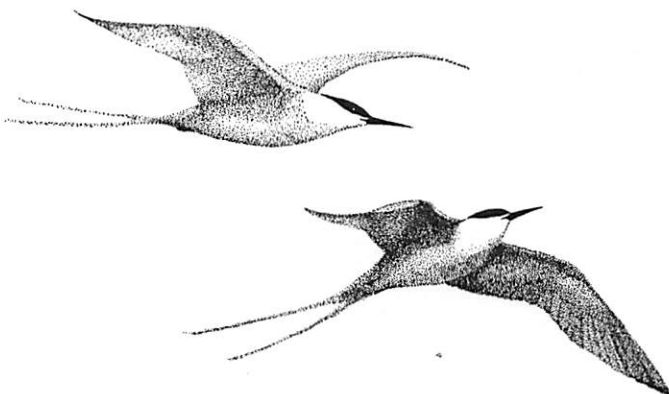
Stephen W. Kress

Colored leg bands help us determine the origin of Roseate Terns that nest at Eastern Egg Rock.

historically been home to nesting terns, but following automation of the island's lighthouse in the early 1980s, gulls had displaced about 1,400 pairs of Common and Arctic Terns, and 20 pairs of Roseate Terns. (Apparently, many of these displaced terns had relocated to, and were nesting at Eastern Egg Rock.) So, in 1984 the USFWS launched a highly successful gull control program to begin restoration of the Petit Manan tern colony. Ironically, the 1894 cholera epidemic at Egg Rock turned out to be a fortuitous event. Displaced terns from Egg Rock were forced to find other suitable habitat; consequently, they recolonized their historic home on Petit Manan Island, now devoid of gulls.

Egg Rock tern numbers were further reduced in 1985 and 1986 to under 100 pairs when a Black-crowned Night-Heron preyed on tern eggs and chicks. The three-year downward trend reversed in 1987, when Eastern Egg Rock hosted an impressive 1,168 pairs of Common Terns, 46 pairs of Arctic Terns, and 59 pairs of Roseates.

Jenny Island in Casco Bay, our newest restoration project (see *Egg Rock Update 1991*), has been the site of some remarkable tern recolonization. The Jenny Island project is co-sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Maine Audubon Society, and the Merymeeting Bay Audubon Society. Just 45 pairs of Common Terns nested on Jenny Island in 1990. The number of nesting terns increased to 54 pairs in 1991 following removal of 32 pairs of Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls. The colony nearly tripled to 159 pairs in 1992, and then more than doubled in 1993 to 363 pairs. These expanded numbers helped to attract six pairs of Roseate Terns—the first to nest in Casco Bay in more than a decade! They joined a viable colony as Jenny Island was the most productive Common Tern colony in Maine for the third consecutive year—this year producing an average of 1.95 chicks per nest. ■



Susan Schubel

Looking Back



Stephen W. Kress

Eastern Egg Rock: where it all began...

Twenty years ago, our dream to bring puffins back to this small, rocky island seemed like an impossible one. But the dedication and generosity of thousands of volunteers and donors made our dream a reality. And the techniques learned on Eastern Egg Rock have been applied to other islands and other species, so that now there is hope for other seabirds that have been extirpated from their former homes.



Stephen W. Kress



Stephen W. Kress

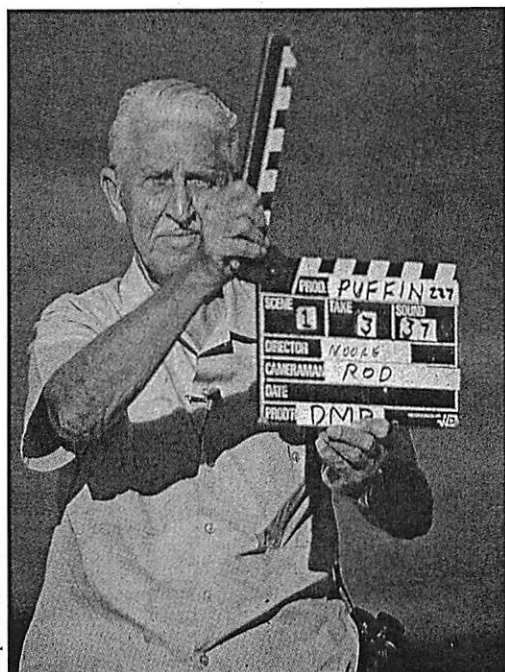
Then ...

From 1974 until 1978, interns and volunteers stayed in a tent.

... and now

Clustered around the "Egg Rock Hilton" for the 20th reunion are (First row seated, left to right) Diane Pence, Bill Bridgeland, Steve Kres.

Shirley Bridgeland, Krista Amey, Robin Juan (Second row seated) Tom French, Trip Dennis, Jennifer Boyce, Seth Benz; (Standing) Jim Kerr, Kathleen Blanchard, Ted Gaine, Dave Shealer, Richard Podolsky, Gary Meite



Stephen W. Kress

Famous people ...

Marlin Perkins directs an episode of Wild Kingdom filmed at Eastern Egg Rock.

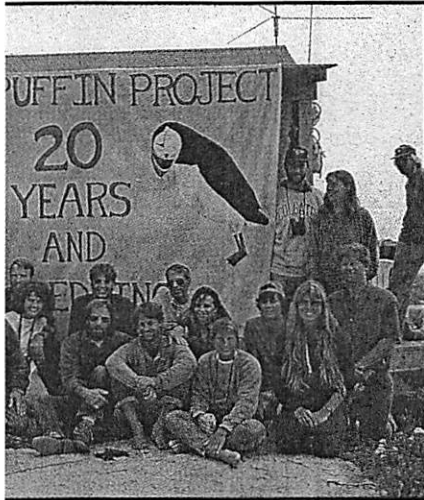
...and the interns who made it happen

Tom Fleischner, one of the first interns, installs a mirror box to attract puffins.



Stephen W. Kress

on Egg Rock: 1973–1993



Twenty years of Puffineers...

Past and present interns and volunteers travelled through thick fog and sloppy seas to gather together and celebrate 20 years of Project Puffin.

Pictured are: (First row seated, left to right) Rose Borzik, Peter Duley, Steve Kress, Pete Salmansohn, Scott Hall, Laura Shealer, Tiffani Thompson;
 (Second row seated) Jennifer Boyce, Kristin Williamson, Beth Orenstein, Bill and Shirley Bridgeland, Trip Dennis, Tom French, Diane Pence, Ted Gaine, Seth Benz;
 (Standing left, first row) Evie Weinstein, Krista Amey, Chris Jolluck, Donna Ramil, Chris Hewson, Wendy Thomlinson; (second row) Lew Durland, Jen Megyesi, Bob Bernstein;
 (Standing right) Dave Shealer, Susan Schubel, Rick Schauffler



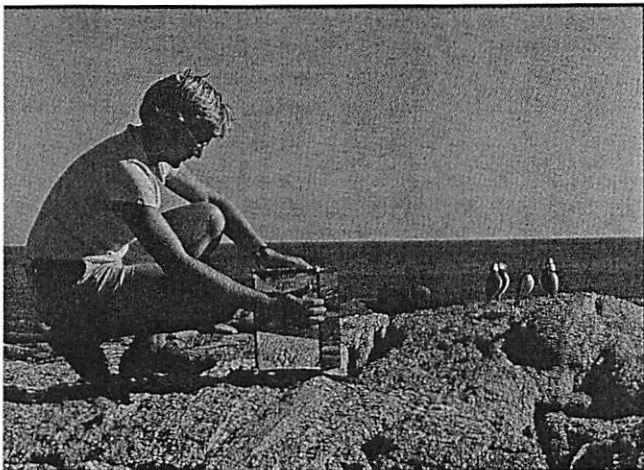
Duryea Morton

Interns from the '70s ...

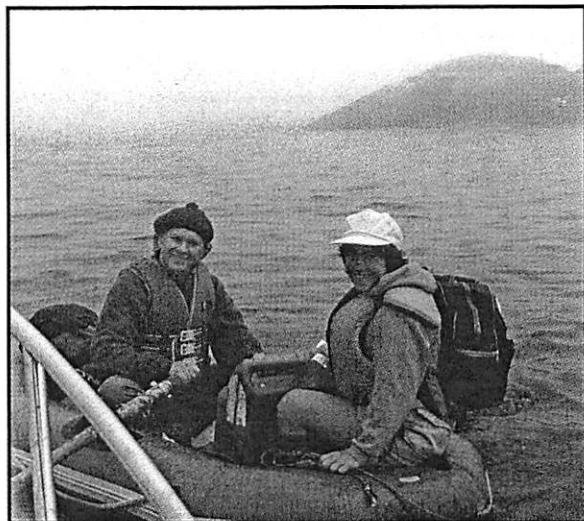
Kathleen Blanchard (right), who was the first Project Puffin intern, records data from transplanted puffin chicks that were raised in artificial burrows. Steve Kress is measuring and weighing the puffin chick.

... to the '90s.

Beth Orenstein (right), who first interned with the Project on Seal Island in the summer of 1991, worked on Egg Rock for the first time this past summer. Steve Kress (in his trademark hat) prepares to row her ashore.



Stephen W. Kress



Rosalie V. Borzik

HIGHLIGHTS

► Joe and Mary Johansen retired this year after 20 years as managers of the Audubon Camp in Maine. Joe and Mary came to Hog Island in 1974—the second year of the fledgling Project Puffin at Eastern Egg Rock. It is very doubtful that the Project would have succeeded without Joe's remarkable skills as boatman. Renowned for his "Norwegian Steam," Joe safely rowed ashore all 950 of the Egg Rock puffins during 11 years of transplants (often at night in rough seas). He also built and rowed ashore the Egg Rock cabin and more than once came to the rescue of the project director and other staff during various boating mishaps. Mary brought her warm enthusiasm and hospitality to the project in many ways—both on the water and in her kitchen. We will certainly miss Joe and Mary, and we wish them our best in all their future adventures.



Evelyn H. Weinstein

Mary (front left) and Joe (front right) Johansen travel to Egg Rock aboard the *Lunda II* with Diane DeLuca (center), Richard Podolsky (rear left) and Bill Bridgeland.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the 1993 Maine seabird research team:

Supervisors:

Seth Benz
Jennifer Boyce
Peter Duley
Ted Gaine
Scott Hall
Susan Schubel
Rick Schauffler

Interns:

Krista Amey
Laura Doty
Chris Hewson
Donna Ramil
Wendy Tomlinson
Kristin Williamson

Volunteers:

Amy Cantor
Susan Carr
Lew Durland
Wing Goodale
Richard Godin
Nicky Hall
Christopher Hymes
Chris Jolluck
Susan Jones
Robin Juan
Jennifer Megyesi
Louis Megyesi
Ethan Nedeau
Barbara Rhoad
Cindy Ryan
Diane Tessaglia
Allison Thau
Tiffani Thompson
Jean Wandel

► On June 29th, 12-year-old Bess Milligan of Gorham, Maine walked aboard R.N. Fish and Son's *Island Lady* tour boat in Boothbay Harbor. She was enthusiastically greeted by Evelyn Weinstein (dressed as a giant puffin) who gave Bess a special prize for being the 10,000th puffin watcher to travel to Egg Rock aboard one of the Audubon tours. Three boat operators presently run Audubon-sponsored tours which circle Eastern Egg Rock, Matinicus Rock, and Seal Island NWR.

► A magnificent diorama, depicting the breeding birds of Stratton Island, was painted by Helen Tupper of Cundy's Harbor, Maine, and installed this summer on the Island. The diorama will help educate the island's many visitors.

► A Great Horned Owl threatened the tern colony at Stratton Island this summer. On opening day, supervisor Seth Benz discovered the owl perched near camp. It later moved into the heronry, then was chased into the surf by gulls where it soon became soaked and flightless. Intern Donna Ramil swam into the surf, and brought the bird safely to shore. The owl was later released in interior Maine, far from the coastal tern colonies. It did not return.

► At Seal Island NWR, supervisor Rick Schauffler discovered a Snowy Owl feeding on terns. Rick was able to capture the weak owl, but despite valiant rehabilitation efforts by Rose Borzik and others, the owl later died.

WANT TO SEE PUFFINS?

For 1994 trips to Eastern Egg Rock from Boothbay Harbor, contact:

R.N. Fish and Son, Inc.,
P.O. Box 660, 65 Atlantic Avenue,
Boothbay Harbor, Maine 04538
(207) 633-3244 or (207) 633-2626

For trips to Eastern Egg Rock from New Harbor, contact:

Hardy Boat Cruises
R.R. 1, Box 530, Shore Road
North Edgecomb, Maine 04556
(207) 882-7907 or (207) 677-2026

For trips to Matinicus Rock and Seal Island from Rockland, contact:

Atlantic Expeditions
HCR 35, Box 290
St. George, Maine 04857
(207) 372-8621

► A pair of *unbanded* puffins nested at Eastern Egg Rock this summer. It's likely that the birds were either young produced at the island or that they were immigrants from a neighboring colony. Usually one or two unbanded puffins join the Egg Rock colony each year, but they usually take the place of one of the older translocated puffins. The presence of two unbanded birds pairing together is an encouraging sign that the colony continues to grow either from native young or from birds produced at other puffin colonies. Fifteen pairs of puffins nested at Egg Rock this summer. ■

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We also thank the Endangered Species Program of Region 5 USFWS for supporting our Roseate Tern foraging study.

We thank the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for permission to work on Eastern Egg Rock and Jenny Island and for field equipment, the US Coast Guard for the privilege of working on Matinicus Rock, the USFWS for allowing us to conduct our studies on Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, and the Canadian Wildlife Service for cooperating with us at Machias Seal Island. We also thank Don Burgess for providing use of the Hog Island facilities and Joe Johansen of the Audubon Camp in Maine for his invaluable logistic support.

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- Ted Berry and Radio Communications, Inc. of Portland, ME for donating radio telephone service
- Kevin Colton for creating and donating Common Murre decoys for Matinicus Rock
- John Drury for the use of his dory at Seal Island
- John Flood for building bird blinds
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- Tom Grant and Harlan Redder of the Cornell University Poultry Department for their assistance obtaining quail chicks and eggs
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- Richard Holzer for videotaping murre behavior at Matinicus Rock
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- Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lee for the gracious hospitality they provide the Stratton Island interns
- Moss Tents for loaning an Optimum 200 tent for use on Stratton Island
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- Prout's Neck Association, especially Mrs. Nancy Adams, for their assistance with our Stratton Island project
- Prout's Neck Women's Auxillary for donating a birdlife diorama and marine radio for Stratton Island
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- Walter Simmons and the Maine Wildlife Woodcarvers Association for carving murre decoys used at Matinicus Rock and puffin decoys for Seal Island
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- Helen and Chris Tupper and Scott Dunning for their assistance and hospitality to our Jenny Island staff
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- Charles Walcott and the entire staff of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for their continued cooperation with Fratercula Fund projects
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Jean Apgar through the Michael A. Apgar Memorial Fund

In Support of the Clara H. Lebovitz Maine Coast Sanctuary Internship Fund

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