



# Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program of the National Audubon Society

## FROM EGG ROCK TO HAWAII

Laysan Albatross are the focus of a new National Audubon Society project to encourage nesting at Kaohikaipu (pronounced KA-OH-EE-KAI-PU) Island off Oahu.

Like the puffins and terns of the Maine coast, albatross sometimes suffered huge losses when they encountered humans. Bones discovered in fossil deposits on the islands of Kauai, Molokai, and Oahu reveal that albatross occupied these islands for at least 1,500 years before they were extirpated by Polynesians who killed them for food and feathers.

Even the remote northwestern Hawaiian Islands were raided for seabird eggs and feathers. Japanese feather hunters plundered these islands to supply the lucrative feather trade in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The slaughter was severe. In 1910 alone, 77 feather hunters were arrested on Laysan Island with two tons of seabird feathers. Similarly in 1911, Japanese feather hunters killed "upwards of 300,000" albatross at Laysan Island. The most recent massacre occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s by United States military personnel who killed 60,000 birds to reduce air strike risks at Midway Island.

Laysan Albatross populations have gone relatively undisturbed in the northwestern Hawaiian islands for the past 30 years due in large part to the protection provided by the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Naval Air Facility of Midway Island, and a state sanctuary at Kure

Atoll. Consequently, the populations have rebounded. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) estimates the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands albatross population to be around 620,000 breeding pairs with the majority of these at Midway Atoll and Laysan Island.

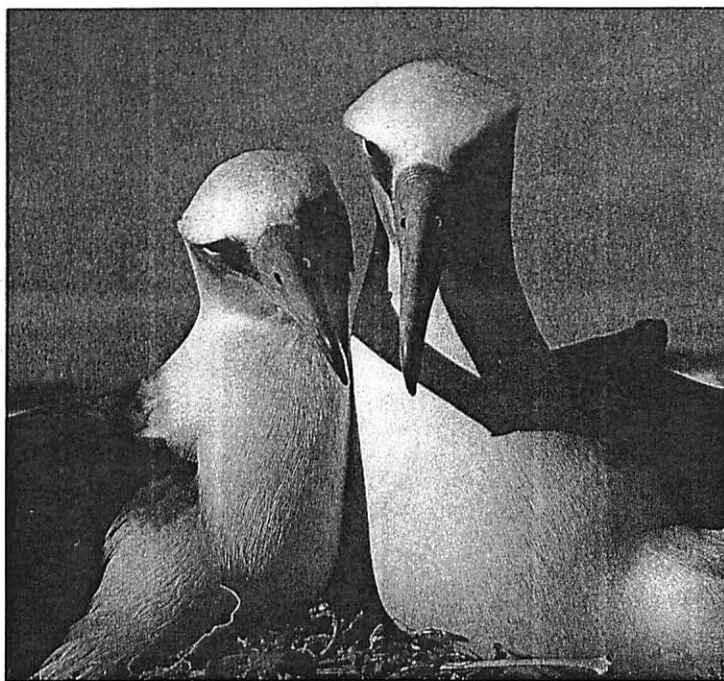
Albatross tend to return to their natal island to breed; however, a small percentage of the population explores new nesting sites. These explorers have rediscovered the main

Hawaiian Islands and have initiated nesting on Kauai, Niihau, and Oahu. But the new colonists are finding life on the main islands very different from the days before humans arrived.

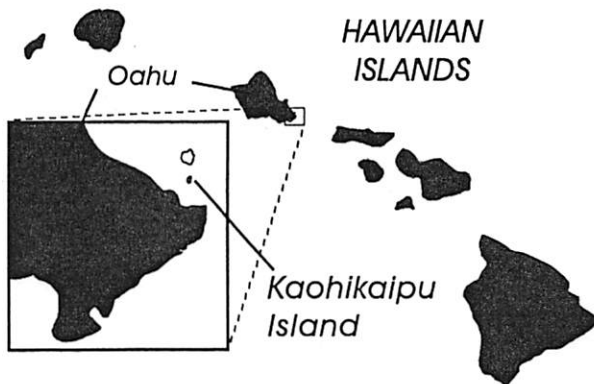
Albatross usually choose open, flat areas where they can stretch their seven-foot wings for safe landings. On crowded Oahu, some of the most appealing landing strips for albatross are airport runways and public recreation areas such as beaches. Here, nesting attempts usually fail due to human disturbance and predation from dogs. Because of the risk to aircraft safety, albatross that nest at Oahu airports are routinely discouraged by Animal

Damage Control personnel of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

With the hope that Laysan Albatross could find a safe place to nest on Oahu, the most densely populated of the Hawaiian Islands, the USFWS invited Stephen Kress and Richard Podolsky to develop an albatross attraction program. The plan is to encourage the big birds to nest at Kaohikaipu Island, a state-protected seabird



*Laysan Albatross are being lured to nest on Kaohikaipu Island, a small island off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii. (See map below.)*



Scott Hall

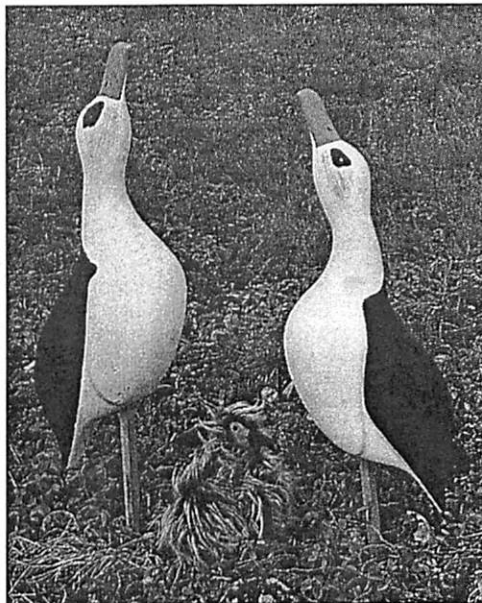
*Our sincerest appreciation goes to the 1994 albatross watchers:*

**Volunteer Coordinator:**

Steve Carter

**Volunteers:**

Marianne Boruch  
Richard Casler  
Andy Cowell  
Laura Curry-Tack  
Charmie Dang  
Elena Flanagan  
Leila Fujimori  
Lynne Fukuda  
Bita Hosseindoust  
Mark Kent  
Marti Kozolowski  
Stan Kozolowski  
Sylvia Leupp  
Tony McCafferty  
Gene Mohlie  
Lyman Perry  
Laurie Peterson  
Lauri Phillips  
Steve Phillips  
Renné Polosky  
Susan Pultz  
Debra Roberts  
Nora Rojek  
Debra Sato  
Lois Swift  
Timothy N. Tack  
Louise Thomas  
Lizette M. Thompson  
Roger Towberman  
Phyllis Turnbull  
Linda Vannatta  
John P. Wendell  
Dan Zevin



*Decoys (left, with chick) are carved in the skypointing display used by courting adults (right). Seventy-eight percent of observed behaviors occurred in the decoy group with chicks.*

nesting sanctuary located about one mile offshore from Makapuu Point (see map).

In mid-December 1994 (with a grant from USFWS' Hawaii Biodiversity Joint Venture), the Audubon team began an attraction program patterned after the highly successful tern restoration work on the Maine coast. The goals of the project are to provide a secure nesting place for Oahu's albatross, reduce risks to airplane traffic and to further develop colony creation techniques that could benefit other endangered seabirds.

On December 16th, we set 28 adult decoys in two circular patterns in similar habitat on Kaohikaipu Island. A weather-proof speaker placed in the center of each decoy group

played courtship display calls throughout the day and night at both decoy groups. The recordings played from compact discs created for the project by the Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Eight life-size chick decoys and six decoy eggs were also set up in one of the groups (chosen by a coin toss) and recordings of chick calls were superimposed over adult courtship calls within this group. Additionally, 21 decoys were set along the seaward shore of the island to attract passing albatross.

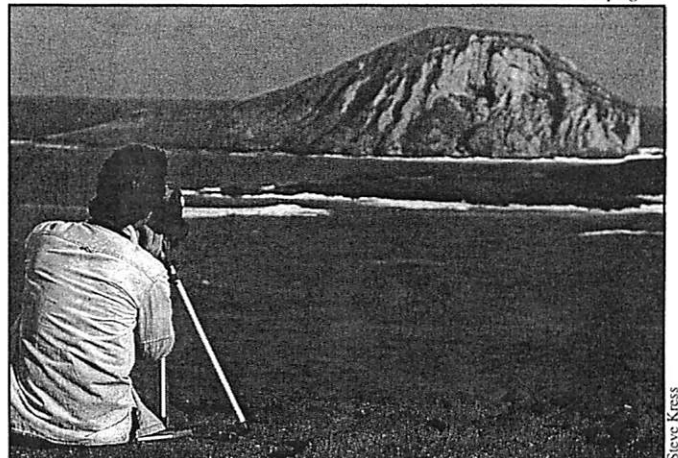
A team of 35 volunteers, mostly from the Hawaii Audubon Society, were trained and organized by project coordinators Scott Hall and Steve Carter to scan Kaohikaipu from a convenient vantage point at nearby Sea Life Park. Staff of Sea Life Park reported that in years of looking out over the waters they had never seen an albatross. Using a

powerful spotting scope, volunteers scanned the decoys every 15 minutes for a total of 441 hours from December 20 to May 14. Their goal was to document visits to the decoy set, monitor behaviors, and learn which decoys were most attractive. The first sighting of an albatross came 20 days later (January 7) when one touched down near a lone decoy.

During the following months, albatross were sighted on or near the island on 42 of 97 observation days. The birds were seen on land 27 different days with as many as four birds on the island at once. Usually they sat, slept or walked among the decoys, but they also danced, rubbed beaks, and copulated.

A strong preference was shown for the decoy set with chicks and eggs, where there were three times as many landings and behaviors than at the decoy group without chicks and eggs. A closer analysis of behavior revealed that *all* courtship dancing occurred in the group with chicks and eggs, and that 22% of all observed behaviors took place next to the chick decoys. The albatross often would approach a chick, and lean down to nuzzle its long, downy fleece.

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*From nearby Sea Life Park, Project coordinator Scott Hall scans Kaohikapu Island for returning albatross.*

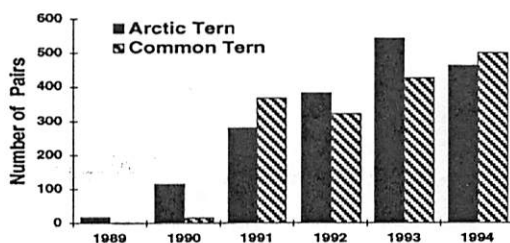
## 1984-1994: TEN YEARS AT SEAL ISLAND NWR

In 1984, the National Audubon Society and the Canadian Wildlife Service began a cooperative program with the USFWS to restore Atlantic Puffins, Common, and Arctic Terns to Seal Island NWR, a 100-acre, windswept island in outer Penobscot Bay, Maine. This ambitious undertaking was an extension of Audubon's first seabird restoration project which successfully brought Atlantic Puffins and terns back to 7-acre Eastern Egg Rock. We asked: *can we replicate the restoration techniques used at Egg Rock to restore puffins and terns to this much larger, more remote site?*

The obstacles were great at the beginning. Puffins last nested at Seal Island in 1887 and terns had not nested there since 1954. Abuses such as excessive hunting and eggging had eliminated the colonies, and predation by hundreds of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls (whose numbers had exploded because abundant fishing waste and garbage at mainland dumps provided more available food) prevented natural repopulation of the island. Further, the United States Navy had used the island as a bombing target in the decade following World War II, and many unexploded ordnances still littered the island.

During the ten years since the project began, we have overcome many of these obstacles, watched a growing tern colony flourish, and anxiously awaited the return of transplanted puffin chicks. The 1994 season not only marked the end of a decade on Seal Island NWR, but also the first time a native chick (one hatched on Seal Island) had returned after spending its first two years at sea.

Tern Colony Growth at Seal Island



Some of the significant events that occurred at Seal Island NWR during the last ten years include:

- April 27, 1984 U.S. Navy Explosives Ordinance Demolition Team clears way for Audubon staff to take up residence.
  - July 18, 1984 The first 100 puffin chicks were transplanted to Seal Island from Great Island, Newfoundland.
  - July 3, 1987 The first transplanted puffin returns.
  - July 1989 First nesting of 16 pairs of Arctic Terns and one pair of Common Terns ends a 35-year absence.
  - July 1992 Discovery of the first puffins nesting at the island in 105 years—seven pairs lay eggs.
  - August 1993 Puffin colony increases to 14 nesting pairs.
  - August 1994 Nineteen pairs of puffins nested.
- “A1,” the first native Seal Island chick, returns after spending two years at sea in the North Atlantic!

As many as 52 puffins at once are present on the island. Of these, 70% are unbanded, indicating that high numbers of puffins immigrated to Seal Island from other puffin colonies which bodes well for future growth.

Arctic Tern numbers increase to 482 pairs, and 481 pairs of Common Terns nest.

We are enthusiastic about the successes at Seal Island NWR, and look forward to starting our next decade.

*If you would like to know more about the restoration projects on Seal Island, please see earlier issues of Egg Rock Update (1984, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993).*

To Eastern Egg Rock  
from Boothbay Harbor:  
R.N. Fish & Son, Inc.  
PO Box 660, 65 Atlantic Avenue  
Boothbay Harbor, Maine 04538  
(207) 633-3244 or (207) 633-2626

To Eastern Egg Rock  
from New Harbor:  
Hardy Boat Cruises  
PO Box 326  
New Harbor, Maine 04554  
(207) 677-2026

Want to  
See  
Puffins  
in  
Maine?



To Matinicus Rock and Seal Island NWR  
from Rockland:  
Atlantic Expeditions  
HCR 35, Box 290  
St. George, Maine 04857  
(207) 372-8621

From Bar Harbor:  
SeaBird Watcher, Inc.  
Bar Harbor Whale Museum  
52 West Street  
Bar Harbor, Maine 04609  
(207) 288-2025 or (800) BIRDS-94

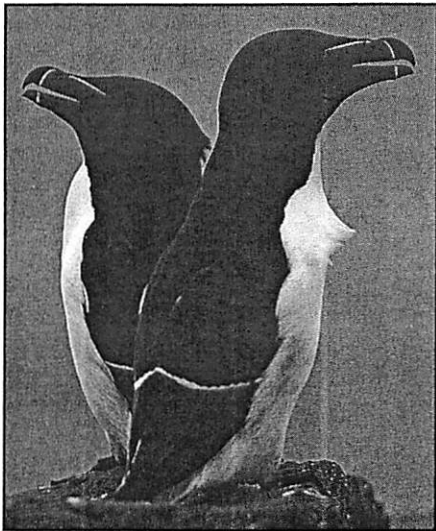
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Because albatross typically prospect for several years before nesting, the first albatross nesting at Kaohikaipu is probably several years away. The prospecting observed this year offers encouragement that albatross will eventually colonize the island. If they do breed on Kaohikaipu, the

new colony will offer a more secure future for albatross on Oahu while luring some of the prospecting birds away from airport runways. Kaohikaipu's albatross will also offer an opportunity for Oahu's human population to watch the bold flight of these great birds as they split their days between sea and land.

## MATINICUS RAZORBILLS REACH RECORD NUMBER

The Razorbills at Matinicus Rock continued their 15-year trend of increase. Razorbills were first discovered nesting at Matinicus Rock in 1967 by Carl W. Buchheister, President Emeritus of National Audubon Society. This year we found a record-high count of 52 active nests. Standard "06:00 hours" counts in 1994 averaged 24 Razorbills, a three-fold increase over the average of eight observed during 1981 when we started protecting the Matinicus razorbills. Like puffins, Razorbills lay one egg each year and this year, most of the Matinicus razorbills successfully fledged their chick.



Steve Kress

## RAZORBILL ATTRACTION BEGINS AT SEAL ISLAND NWR

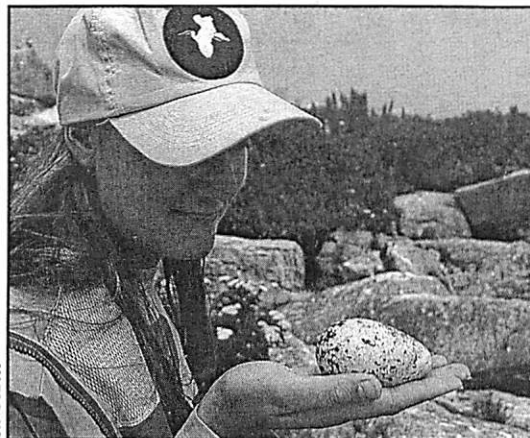
This summer we set 20 life-size Razorbill decoys atop a jumble of suitable nesting habitat on the northeast tip of Seal Island NWR and played a CD recording of their growling sounds from under a nearby boulder. The initial results of this experiment are encouraging—we observed as many as 12 Razorbills ashore loafing and courting among the decoys and live puffins. Razorbills were sighted this summer on 31 of 47 days between June 15 and July 31 (with an average of 3 birds on land daily). On nine occasions, we watched Razorbills exploring for nest sites under boulders—behavior that could precede egg laying in the future.

Razorbills presently nest at just five islands in the Gulf of Maine. Matinicus Rock is the nearest source of Seal Island's prospecting Razorbills. If they do nest at Seal Island, their future status in the Gulf of Maine will be more secure in the event that a crisis such as an oil spill, disease epidemic, or predation were to occur at the few existing colonies.

## AWARDS

At a ceremony in Washington, D.C. on May 17th, Stephen Kress was one of 15 Americans to receive the **40th Annual Chevron-Times Mirror Magazines Conservation Award** for developing seabird restoration techniques.

National Audubon's Seabird Restoration Program (Project Puffin) received the USFWS's **Outstanding Contribution Award** from Regional Director Howard Larsen at a special ceremony held at Acadia National Park on July 9th. The award recognized Audubon's partnership with the USFWS in successfully restoring puffins and terns to Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge.



Steve Kress

Krista Amey holds the murre egg from the first nesting at Machias Seal Island.



Steve Kress

Four nests of Great Cormorant succeeded on Seal Island NWR in 1994.

## DECOY MURRE CHICKS SET ON MATINICUS ROCK

The program to establish a Common Murre colony at Matinicus Rock continued in 1994 as we tested the attractiveness of murre chick decoys and chick sounds. Observers hidden in nearby observation blinds noted the behaviors of prospecting murres among the decoys. The murres did not nest this summer, but pre-breeding behaviors such as mutual preening and copulations were common. (For further details on the murre attraction project, see *Egg Rock Update 1992 and 1993*).

## OUR SPECIES EXTEND THEIR RANGES

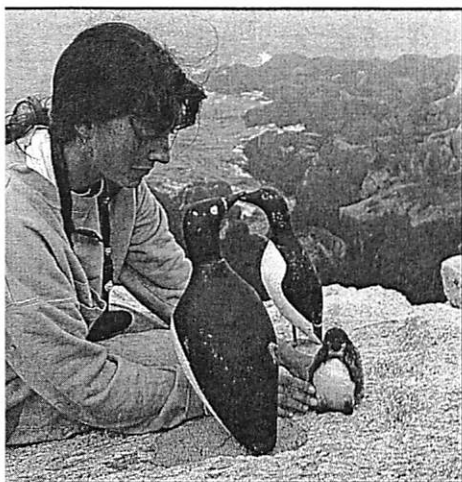
Audubon biologists discovered four range extensions for colonial waterbirds in the Gulf of Maine this summer:

On July 14, at **Machias Seal Island** on the United States and Canadian border, Krista Amey and Rose Borzik found the first nest of a **Common Murre**. Later, Nathan Kress discovered a second murre egg. Both eggs rolled into rain pools and failed to hatch, but it's likely the birds will be back for another try next summer—Common Murres have frequented the shores of Machias Seal Island since the late 1960s. Aside from two disjunct colonies in the Gulf of Maine, the nearest murre colony is on Bonaventure Island, 300 miles to the northeast on the Gaspé Coast of Quebec.

On May 14th, Rick Schauffler, Matt Drennen and John Drury discovered four pairs of **Great Cormorants** nesting at **Seal Island NWR** in a Double-crested Cormorant colony. The nearest Great Cormorant colonies are on Roberts Islands in Penobscot Bay located approximately 10 miles northeast of Seal Island NWR. The new colony on Seal Island extends the species range southward by 10 miles. All four nests were successful.

On May 29, Sally Lee and Krista Amey discovered the first Maine breeding pair of **American Oystercatchers** at National Audubon's Phineas W. Sprague Sanctuary on **Stratton Island** off Prout's Neck in southern Maine. The pair incubated their single egg on a cobble beach until it was near hatching, but a high tide on a full-moon night floated the egg to sea. The pair remained on territory throughout the summer. The nearest oystercatcher nests are at Governor's Island in Boston Harbor, Massachusetts.

Two pairs of **Great Egrets** also nested at **Stratton Island** this summer and successfully fledged young—another new breeding record for Maine. The nearest Great Egret colony is in Manchester, Massachusetts.



Steve Kress

## DECOY CARVERS LEND A HAND

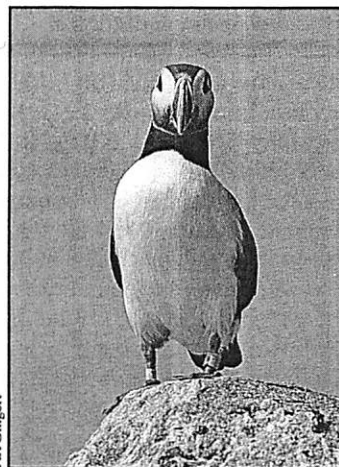
This past year several nationally known decoy carvers contributed their skills to create special decoys for seabird attraction projects in Maine and Hawaii. **Donal O'Brien**, Chairman of Audubon's Board of Directors, created the Razorbill decoys we used at Seal Island NWR; **Kevin Colton** of Seneca Falls, NY and **Jeff Duxbury** of Dux Dekes in Greenwich, NY, created adult and chick murre decoys and the albatross chick decoys; **Walter Simmons** of Duck Trap Decoys in Lincolnville, ME and members of **Penobscot Bay Carver's Association** (ME) carved most of the Matinicus Rock murre decoys; **Jim Henry** of Waitsville, VT produced the adult albatross models using a special polyethylene process. To assist with the albatross decoy production, the **Japanese Wild Bird Society** donated a magnificent Short-tailed Albatross model carved by Mr. Haruo Uchiyama.

## NEW PUFFINS AT EGG ROCK

The puffin colony at Eastern Egg Rock remained stable this year at 15 pairs, and several new puffins arrived to replace some of the original transplanted Newfoundland puffins. Two Newfoundland transplants did not return, Bi45, a 15-year-old female, and Y00, a 16-year-old female. However,

another pair of unbanded puffins successfully nested.

Pair loyalty remained the norm at Egg Rock. Of the 15 pairs, 14 retained the same mate they had in 1993. Ten pairs have kept the same mate for five or more years. Of these, five pairs have nested in the same burrow with the same mate for more than *ten* years!



Art Gingert

## AVICULTURALISTS PARTICIPATE IN MAINE SEABIRD RESTORATION

This summer aviculturalists from four captive puffin collections assisted our seabird restoration projects on Seal Island NWR and Matinicus Rock. **Sea World San Diego, Sea World Florida, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and the New York Zoological Society** sent their seabird specialists to Maine to study these birds in the wild. The aviculturalists shared their skills with Audubon biologists and interns while strengthening their knowledge of seabird ecology. The captive flocks will also benefit from this field experience as the participants enhance their knowledge of natural diets, nesting habitat, plumage condition and color of the wild birds. This information will help make their artificial environment more "real" for seabirds. We are very proud of this growing alliance.

## NEW ENGLAND TERNS MOVE TO JENNY ISLAND

In just four years, Jenny Island's nesting tern population has expanded from 59 to 500. And this summer 15 pairs of endangered Roseate Terns joined the growing colony.

Detailed observations of tern leg bands reveal that some of the new arrivals are coming to Jenny Island from as far away as Long Island, New York and Massachusetts.

In 1991, National Audubon Society and the Maine Audubon Society initiated the Jenny Island Project to help restore a productive tern colony in Casco Bay. Stephen Kress and Jane Ar buckle organized the project and recruited interns and volunteers to staff the island (see *Egg Rock Update 1991*.)

Terns nested at nine offshore islands in Casco Bay in 1885, but major slaughters by milliner's agents in 1886 and 1887 reduced the number of colonies to four by 1890. Although tern numbers increased during the early 1900s as feather fashions faded, a long, downward trend started in the mid-1930s. Pressure from growing populations of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls kept the terns off most of their historic nesting islands. By 1991, Casco Bay terns nested on just five islands, and these suffered chronic nest failure and high predation.

Jenny Island was selected as a site for tern restoration in Casco Bay because it had abundant nesting habitat and relatively few nesting gulls. In 1991, to make the colony more attractive to terns, 25 gulls were killed by the USDA Department of Animal Damage Control through the application of the avicide DRC 1339. Since then, no gulls have been killed and the number of gull nests destroyed has declined each year. This year, just five pairs of gulls attempted to nest at Jenny Island.

Over the past four years, terns have abandoned all of the marginal nesting sites in Casco Bay, and the Jenny Island colony size increased. By 1993, Jenny Island, with a total of 363 nesting pairs, was the only tern colony left in Casco Bay. Researchers predicted that the colony might stop growing by 1994 if most of the growth was coming from local recruits. However, there was another dramatic gain in 1994. Not only did the Common Tern numbers increase by 128 pairs, the endangered Roseate Terns numbers jumped from 6 to 15 pairs.

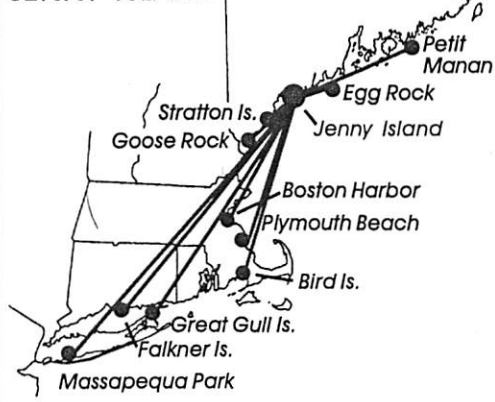
Many of the Jenny Island terns were wearing metal and colored plastic leg bands, but some of the colors and combinations observed were not ones used by National Audubon Society researchers. This meant that these birds had come from colonies other than those maintained by the National Audubon Society. Using spotting scopes set at high power, Scott Hall, Laird Henkel, and Kriss Neuman read the numbers from 36 metal bands—a remarkable accomplishment since each number is only 2 mm high and eight numbers are written on the band that wraps around the tern's tiny leg!

After sharing these numbers with other researchers and the Bird Banding Laboratory of the National Biological Survey, we learned the following: Five of the birds had been marked on Jenny Island as chicks. Fourteen were banded as chicks at other Maine colonies, including nine from Eastern Egg Rock and two from Stratton Island. The 17 remaining birds came from eight colonies south of Maine, including seven from Great Gull Island in Long Island Sound and five from Bird Island in Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts. The furthest source of immigrants was a colony in Massapequa Park on Long Island, New York.

The proportions of in-state and out-of-state birds obtained by reading band numbers can be applied to the entire colony. If we assume these proportions are correct, then nearly half of the terns at Jenny Island hatched outside of Maine and ventured northward to Jenny Island.

The terns that nested at Jenny Island during the last four years profited from excellent breeding conditions. The average fledging success was 1.74 chicks per pair, the highest average tern productivity of any island in Maine. The success of the colony is due in part to the presence of resident wardens who keep gulls from stealing chicks and eggs, and inform the public that Jenny Island is a protected colony where landings are not permitted during the nesting season. The island's close proximity to consistently reliable sources of Atlantic Herring, the tern's primary fish food, has also helped adults provide abundant and nutritious food to their chicks. ■

### TERN IMMIGRATION TO JENNY ISLAND



*Our sincere appreciation goes to the 1994 Maine seabird research team:*

#### **Supervisors:**

Jennifer Boyce  
Laird Henkel  
Donna Ramil  
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James Smart  
Kristin Williamson

#### **Volunteers:**

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Laura Burch  
Susan Carr  
Hilary Cerny  
Marisel Comulada  
Beth Conklin  
Charles Doersch  
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Helga Faulenbach  
Martha Fischer  
Wendy Fox  
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Ed Hearne  
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Meredith Millman  
Joseph Nocera  
John Quimby  
Valerie Randall  
Barbara Rhoad  
Carey Rowsom  
Lorraine Schepis  
Marty Schlabach  
Michal Smart  
Rick Smith  
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- Students of the Montessori School of Ithaca, NY for making ceramic albatross eggs and Mary Ann Bowman for "baking" the eggs
- Kevin Colton and Jeff Duxbury for creating and donating Laysan Albatross and Common Murre chick decoys
- Lang Elliot of NatureSound Studios for donating use of seabird sound recordings, producing and creating the master tapes for the "Voices of Maine Seabirds" cassette, also for pitching in with carpentry projects
- Carl Freeman for donating puffin notecards for use as premiums
- Robin Gleed, Jerry Decker and pharmacy staff of the NYS College of Veterinary Medicine for assistance with the night-heron study
- United Airlines for transporting albatross decoys to Hawaii
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- Prout's Neck Women's Auxiliary for improving our Stratton Island radio system with new solar panels and batteries
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- Godfrey Rockefeller for always pulling through when the Stratton Island staff called for assistance
- George Sanford for donating lumber
- Clark Smith and the staff of the Prout's Neck Yacht Club and Norm Dugas of the Black Point Inn for their assistance with Stratton Island logistics
- Sea Life Park staff on Oahu, HI for providing our volunteers a place to view albatross
- Walter Simmons of Duck Trap Decoys for donating murre decoys
- Talmadge Engineering, Kennebunkport, ME for assistance with solar energy applications
- Helen and Chris Tupper and Scott Dunning for their assistance and hospitality to our Jenny Island staff
- Chris Tupper for building timer switches for the albatross and razorbill attraction projects
- US National Guard in Augusta, ME for loaning night-vision goggles
- Charles Walcott and the entire staff of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for their continued cooperation with Project Puffin
- Y & S Candies and Frank Nicholas for donating a case of Twizzlers for our interns

## 1993-1994 CONTRIBUTORS

### SPECIAL GIFTS

#### *In Memory of Michael A. Apgar*

Jean Apgar through the Michael A. Apgar Memorial Fund

#### *In Memory of Melville H. Ireland*

Mrs. William C. Coughlan  
The Ireland Foundation  
Mrs. R. Henry Norweb, Jr.

#### *In Support of the Clara H. Lebovitz Maine Coast Sanctuary Intern Fund*

Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Lebovitz  
Beth Ann & Saul Segal

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