



Egg Rock Update

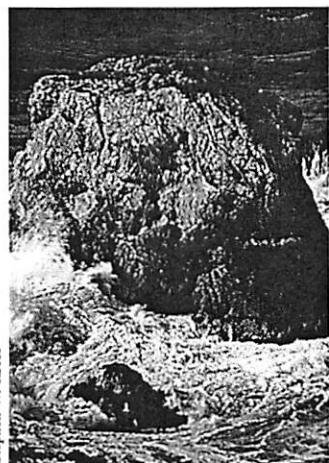
Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program of the National Audubon Society



MURRE RESTORATION BEGINS AT DEVIL'S SLIDE ROCK

Using techniques pioneered off the Maine Coast, National Audubon Society began a cooperative program with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Biological Service to restore Common Murres to Devil's Slide Rock, located 11 miles south of San Francisco. The Project is funded with monies administered by the Apex Houston Trustee Council.

The project is intended to help murre populations on the central California coast which have suffered major losses from gill netting and oil spills. These human-caused problems, combined with losses from a disruptive flow of warm water (El Niño of 1982–1983), resulted in a 60% decline in murre numbers along the central coast of California between 1980–1986.



Stephen W. Kress

Common Murres have nested on Devil's Slide Rock since at least 1937 and about 2,900 nested atop the 36-by-78-foot rock as recently as 1982, before the combined assaults of El Niño, gill nets, and oil spills. The final blow to this colony occurred in February of 1986 when the Apex Houston barge spilled crude oil from the San Joaquin Valley, resulting in the deaths of about 9,000 seabirds, including about 6,000 murres. Biologists noted that murres no longer nested on the Rock in 1986 and no nesting was observed in subsequent years. Devil's Slide Rock was the only murre colony between San Francisco and Monterey Bay. The absence of this colony created a gap of 100 miles between murre colonies along the near shore central California coast.

Murre restoration began this past January 7th, nearly 10 years following the Apex spill. Using technical climbing equipment, USFWS and Audubon biologists scaled the rock to install the first of more than 400 decoys of murre adults, chicks and eggs. The biologists also installed twelve three-sided mirror boxes and two sound systems which

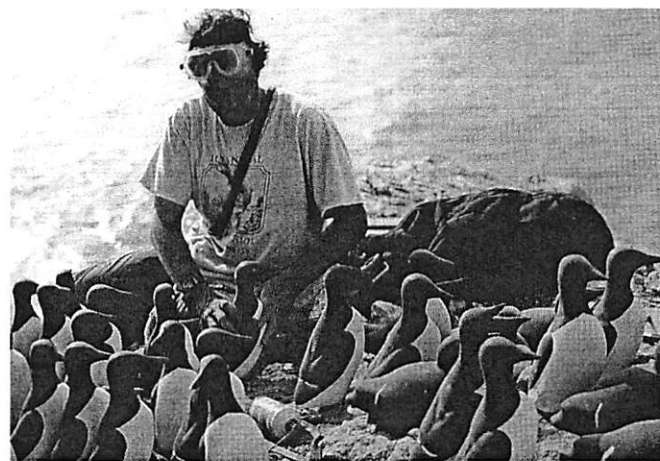


broadcast nonstop CD recordings of murre colony sounds.

A single murre was observed exploring among the decoys the day after installation of the models and up to 29 murres were observed daily throughout the 1996 nesting season. Although the first nesting was not expected until several years into the project, there was great elation on May 26th when project biologists discovered the first of six eggs. On July 13th, the first fledgling of the three successful nests leaped off the Rock and followed its parent to sea.

Murres typically return to the same colony year after year and often nest in the same location. The idea of luring seabirds using artificial attractants is based on the birds' requirement that a minimum number of individuals must be present before breeding can occur. Once this "critical mass" is reached, the birds will start a new colony. The rapid recolonization on Devil's Slide Rock may have occurred because some birds survived from the original colony. When these birds discovered the decoys, mirrors and sound system, they found the confidence to stay and nest. The technique has previously helped to restore colonies of terns, puffins and storm-petrels to former nesting islands on the Maine coast.

The members of the 1996 murre restoration team are: Mike Parker, leader, and Jennifer Boyce, Phil Capitolo, Harry Carter, Elizabeth McLaren, Mari Orgtwerth, and Susan Schubel, biologists.



Stephen W. Kress

Devil's slide rock rises from the California surf (far left), situated south of Point Reyes and north of Monterey Bay (center). Mike Parker secures the decoys in the rock (above). Common Murres returned to Devil's Slide Rock this summer to nest among the decoys, mirrors, and recorded murre calls.

PUFFIN NEWS

EASTERN EGG ROCK

Machias Seal Island puffin nests at EER

The number of nesting puffins increased by three pairs at Eastern Egg Rock for a high count of 19 pairs this summer, equaling the island's 1986 high. The total has crept upward in the last three years from a low of 14 pairs in 1993. The increase may reflect movement of birds into the colony from as far as Machias Seal Island (MSI), located 120 miles to the east. MSI is home to about 1,000 nesting pairs of puffins, yet it is an island just twice the size of Egg Rock.

Proof that outside recruitment occurs at Egg Rock was gathered this summer when MSI puffin #516 was discovered nesting on the island. Puffin #516 was banded as a fledgling at MSI on July 18, 1991, before it headed out to sea. It was seen previously at Matinicus Rock on five days in 1993 and again in 1994, and for ten days on Egg Rock in 1995. This bird was seen delivering fish at a new Egg Rock nest site this summer. Within a few minutes, an unbanded puffin was confirmed as its mate. Young puffins have been known to settle at colonies other than their own, but this is the first such example at Egg Rock. In addition, a second new nest with two unbanded parents was discovered nearby.

The origin of the unbanded birds will never be known, but we do know that these unbanded puffins are comprising an increasing proportion of the Egg Rock colony. This summer, only 17 (45%) of the breeding birds were surviving Newfoundland transplants (the oldest birds are now 19 years old), while 21 were unbanded, non-translocated puffins. It is likely that most of the unbanded puffins are young produced at Egg Rock, because the boulders on Egg Rock make it difficult to reach all chicks for banding. However, the sighting of MSI #516 indicates that recruitment includes young produced elsewhere.

Another heartening event occurred this summer when 55 puffins were seen at once—a major increase in the island's previous high count of 32 in 1992.



Stephen W. Kress

On Seal Island, unbanded puffins (of unknown origins) outnumber puffins transplanted from Newfoundland.

SEAL ISLAND NWR

40 puffin pairs nest!

In 1992, eight years after restoration efforts began, seven pairs of puffins recolonized Seal Island. In 1996, 40 nesting pairs were discovered, 60% more than last summer. Seal Island, located 20 miles offshore from Rockland, Maine, once hosted the largest puffin colony off mid-coast Maine, but hunting for meat and feathers decimated the original colony by 1887 (see *Egg Rock Update* 1984, 1992, 1995). Most of the expansion has occurred near existing burrows, leaving large areas of suitable habitat for future growth.

The previous record-high count of puffins seen at one time—63 in 1995—was also exceeded this summer, when interns counted 102 puffins on July 30. A tally of translocated vs. non-translocated puffins showed a preponderance of non-translocated birds: 84% of the puffins were either banded as chicks at other Maine Islands (Matinicus Rock and Machias Seal) or were of unknown origin (likely also from Maine colonies). The colonies on Matinicus Rock and Machias Seal Island are also growing, producing young that are now immigrating to the newly restored colony on Seal Island. This summer 70% of the known Seal Island breeders were immigrants—the remaining 30% were birds translocated to Seal Island as Newfoundland chicks. Seal Island puffins are very successful at rearing young: this year we estimate that 95% of the nests successfully produced fledglings. ❖

MATINICUS ROCK

123 active puffin nests

The Matinicus Rock puffin colony was reduced by hunting for food and feathers to just one pair in 1901, but protection by Audubon-hired light keepers in that year and subsequent protection by Audubon biologists has helped this colony continue its steady recovery. This year we counted 123 nests and banded 35 chicks, all of which were in excellent health. ❖

Want to see Puffins in Maine?

Contact these tour operators:

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 or (800) 2-PUFFINS
E-mail: Hardy@biddeford.com

To Matinicus Rock and Seal Island NWR

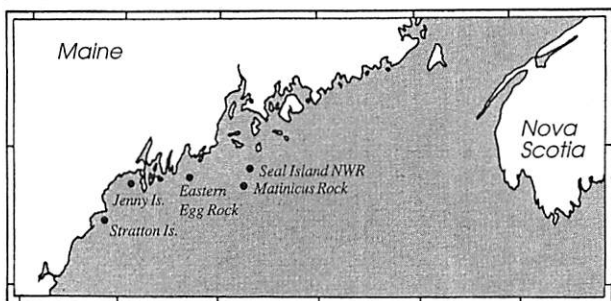
from Rockland:

Atlantic Expeditions
HCR 35 Box 290
St. George, Maine 04857
(207) 372-8621
E-mail: Atlantex@midcoast.com

1997 Puffin Trips

TERN NEWS

Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns continued a decade-long trend of population recovery reaching their highest numbers of the last 60 years (see Egg Rock Update 1995). But rain, fog and poor-quality food supplies led to low production of chicks throughout coastal Maine (for long-lived birds such as terns, occasional years with low reproduction are normal). Here are some highlights of the nesting season at Audubon's sanctuaries:

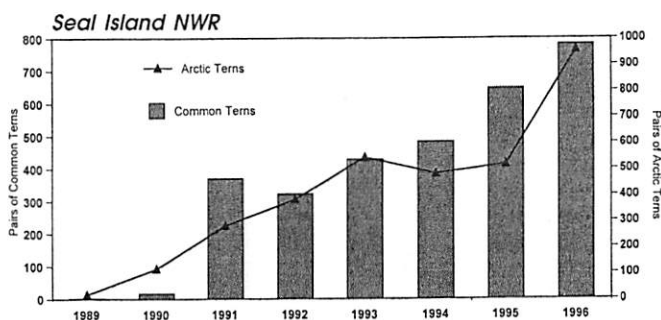


MATINICUS ROCK

Matinicus Rock has a long history as a secure nesting place for Arctic Terns—the colony dates back at least to the early 1900s. While other Maine colonies are growing, Matinicus Rock remains stable, perhaps because of the dramatic growth of the nearby Seal Island NWR colony (located just 6 miles east). As with the other offshore colonies, poor food supplies and wet weather in June and July reduced nesting success to an average of 0.5 fledglings per nest.

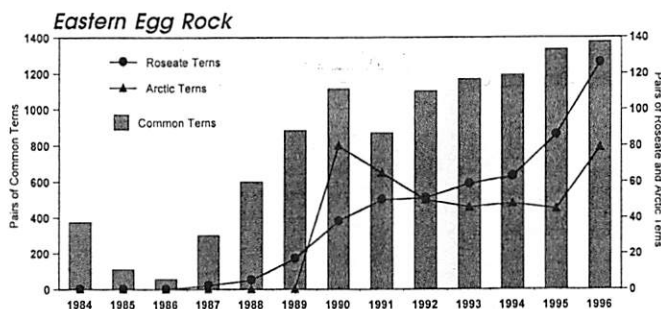
SEAL ISLAND NWR

Restored in 1989 after about a 40-year absence, the Seal Island tern colony continued its expansion to 1,736 pairs of Arctic and Common Terns, a 49% increase over the 1995 census of 1,162 pairs. However, nesting success was low this year with an average of only 0.5 fledglings produced in each nest.



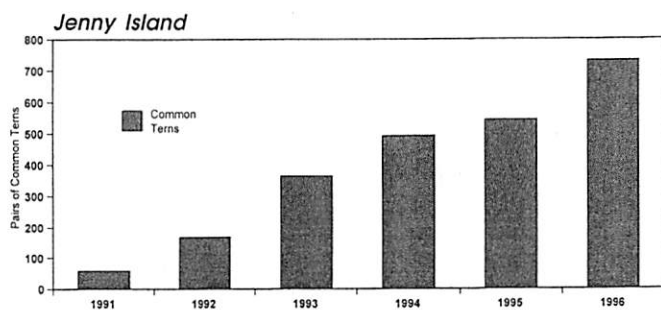
EASTERN EGG ROCK

In 1996, Eastern Egg Rock was the largest nesting colony in Maine for both Common Terns (1,374 pairs) and the endangered Roseate Terns (126 pairs). Restored in 1980 after a 44-year absence, terns increased their numbers to 1,579 pairs, up 108 pairs from last year. A record 79 pairs of Arctic Terns nested at the island. While the total number of nesting pairs was up, rain and poor food supplies led to low survival of chicks for Common Terns (0.47 fledglings per nest). Roseate Terns fared somewhat better, fledging an average of 0.82 chicks per nest.



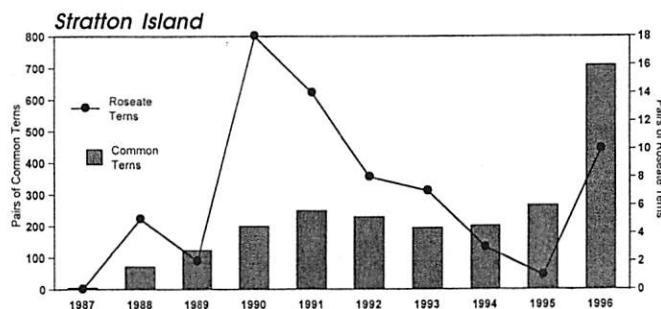
JENNY ISLAND

Tern restoration began at Jenny Island in 1991 when a summer camp was established to protect a threatened colony of 45 pairs of Common Terns. In the last six years, the colony on this two-acre island has expanded to 730 pairs. Production of chicks was better here than at some of the offshore sites with an average of 1.25 chicks produced for each nesting attempt. Great Horned Owls threatened Jenny Island this summer, but the three that landed on the island were trapped and safely released far away.



STRATTON ISLAND

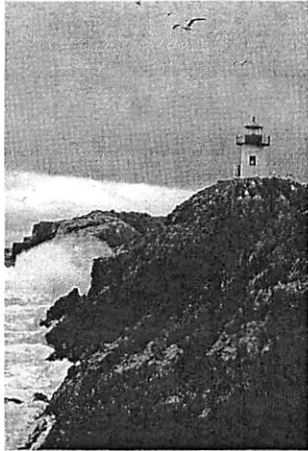
Tern restoration at Stratton Island began in 1986. Using decoys and recorded sounds, we lured terns back to Stratton's beaches which had had been home to the largest southern Maine colonies in the 1930s. Decoys and recordings are no longer necessary, but management now requires moving some nests up sandy beaches (to avoid high tides) and shepharding human visitors away from sensitive nesting areas. This summer, 708 pairs of Common Terns nested, up from 265 pairs in 1995. Ten pairs of Roseate Terns also nested this year. ❖





FIRST YEAR, FIRST NEST FOR POND ISLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM

A new tern restoration project began this summer on Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge in the mouth of the Kennebec River near Popham Beach. Pond Island is a 10-acre sanctuary within the Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge.



Sean Donaghy

The project is one step toward the goal of restoring viable tern colonies in all of the state's major bays and river estuaries, and is co-sponsored and funded by National Audubon Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

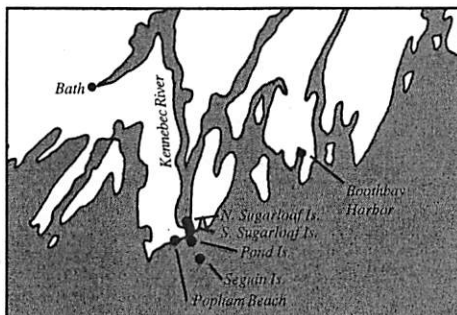
The number of terns nesting on Maine coast islands has increased greatly over the past decade (see Egg Rock Update 1995); however, terns are extremely vulnerable to catastrophic events such as

oil spills and disease because 95% of the Gulf of Maine population nest on just seven islands. If successful, the project will help reduce this risk by restoring terns to another of their historic nesting sites.

Pond and nearby North and South Sugarloaf Islands have long histories as tern nesting islands. The area is especially good for terns because forage fish such as herring, hake and sand lance are abundant in the turbulent water surrounding the island. The islands are also safe places for nesting because mammal predators such as fox, skunk and raccoon can't swim. Terns nested on these islands in the mid 1800s, and nested on Pond as recently as 1937, but by the end of the decade they were displaced by Herring Gulls. For many years, nearby North Sugarloaf hosted the largest Roseate Tern nesting colony in Maine—about 250 pairs nesting there in 1971. Terns abandoned the Sugarloaf Islands by 1985, displaced by Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls.

Tern restoration followed a three-step process that has proved effective at other Maine tern restoration sites: (1) gull control using the avicide DRC 1339 followed by egg removal, (2) placement of decoys with CD recordings of colony sounds, and (3) establishment of a field camp.

The project got off to an encouraging start when terns landed just two and a half hours after the researchers placed the decoys and turned on the sound system. Terns continued



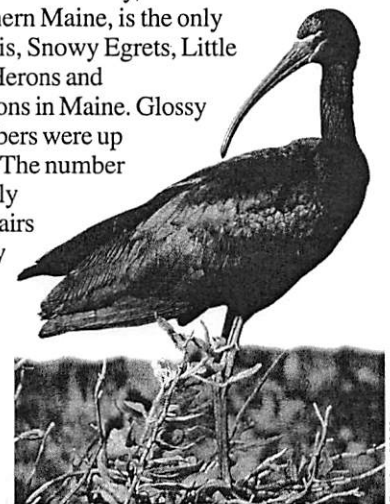
Michelle Lockwood

Terns nested at Pond Island (left) until about 1937. In the summer of 1996, one pair, dubbed "Adam and Eve," laid the first eggs on this island in nearly 60 years. The eggs were laid just inches from the tern decoys.

to land on the island every day throughout the nearly three-month field season. As many as 31 Common Terns were seen landing among the decoys, favoring the area near the speakers. Then on July 13, Tropical Storm Bertha ripped over Pond Island forcing Island Supervisor Sean Donaghy and Assistant Pat Hanley to pack up their tent and seek shelter on the mainland. The storm abated and they returned to the island the next day. To their surprise, a tern nest with two eggs was positioned equidistant between the two stereo speakers. Dubbed "Adam and Eve," the pair laid their eggs during Bertha's 50 mph winds. Although the eggs did not hatch, the recolonization of Pond Island during the first year of the Project offers encouragement that terns will make a strong recovery and will once again grace the shores of the Kennebec River. ❖

EGRETS AND IBIS NUMBERS CLIMB AT STRATTON ISLAND

Audubon's Stratton Island sanctuary, located off Prout's Neck in southern Maine, is the only mixed colony of Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Tri-colored Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons in Maine. Glossy Ibis and Snowy Egret numbers were up dramatically this summer. The number of nesting Glossy Ibis nearly doubled, up 96% from 83 pairs in 1995 to 163 pairs. Snowy Egrets also showed an increase from 97 pairs in 1995 to 125 pairs this summer. A pair of American Oystercatchers nested again at Stratton Island, successfully raising two young after Audubon staff moved the nest to high ground prior to extreme tides. ❖



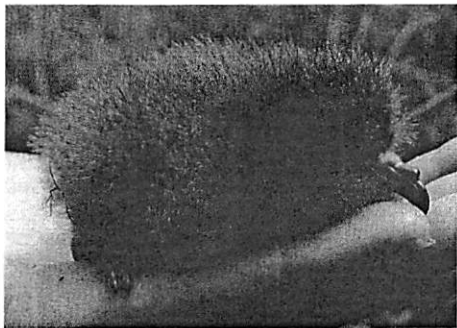
Stephen W. Kress

Maine's largest Glossy Ibis colony nearly doubled in size this summer.



LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS OCCUPY EGG ROCK PUFFIN BURROWS

Researchers at Eastern Egg Rock conducted an island-wide research this summer for Leach's Storm-Petrel burrows, tallying 113 active burrows. The most surprising discovery was the extent to which the petrels had occupied the artificial burrows originally created to rear translocated puffin chicks. Approximately 200 burrows were built between 1973 and 1986 (either by tunneling into the ground or by laying blocks of sod on the soil surface.) Of the 113 active nests, 84 (75%) were in artificial puffin burrows. The increase in petrel nests is also likely due to the absence of nesting Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls. Egg Rock is the southernmost nesting place for petrels in Maine. ❖



Stephen W. Kress

Eighty-four Leach's Storm-Petrel chicks were found in artificial puffin burrows this summer on Eastern Egg Rock.

AUDUBON CELEBRATES 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIGHTHOUSE

Matinicus Rock is National Audubon Society's oldest sanctuary. William Dutcher, a founder of the Audubon movement, hired William G. Grant, Head Light Keeper of Matinicus Rock on April 6, 1900 to protect the island's Arctic Terns.



Stephen W. Kress

In this capacity, Grant was the first wildlife Warden on the Maine coast, and the first of a proud tradition of Audubon sanctuaries and wardens. Grant and subsequent keepers (including famous lighthouse heroine Abbey Burgess) lived in the same residence occupied by today's Audubon Wardens. The granite fortress, carved from the island's bedrock, has withstood storms that have topped the island, washing lesser structures to the sea. Today's wardens protect the state's largest colonies of puffins and razorbills and the second largest colony of Arctic Terns. ❖



Stephen W. Kress

1996 Audubon Staff Warden/Biologists included (l to r) Becky Bishop (Supervisor), Lance Tanino, Heather Urquhart, and Will Gardiner

ALBATROSS UPDATE

The project to establish a colony of Laysan Albatross on Kaohikaipu Island off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii continued into its third year. Fifty life-size decoys and two CD systems for playing albatross calls were placed on the island and observers began watching from Sea Life Park by late November. A total of 68 volunteers contributed 627 hours on 137 days from November through April. While conducting watches from the mainland using a spotting scope, they discovered albatross around the island on 26 days—19% of the observation days. On ten days during the period, they spotted albatross on the ground among the decoys. Since albatross are long-lived birds, it is likely that the birds which were present this summer will be back in subsequent years to colonize the island. ❖

Our sincere appreciation goes to the 1996 albatross watchers:

Volunteer Coordinator

Gail G. Kaaialli

Volunteers

Michelle Aguilar
Cy Barker
Bob Becker
Synda Becker
Phyllis Biemes
Arlene Buchholz
Lorri Cambell
Maryann Cambell
Kalani Chock
Zach Joe Dahl
Sharmianne Dang
Dale Daniels
Jen Davis
Robert Davis
Tom Duddy
Kimberly Fjarly
Alfredo Flores
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Jody Genetti
Robin Genetti
Ruth Gronde
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Phyllis Turnbull
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Karen Waterhous
John Wendel
Bob Westmorland
Cecelia Westmorland
Deen Westmorland
Vernon Willis
Diane Willis
Debbie Wolf
Doug Wolf

Our sincere appreciation goes to the 1996 Maine research team:

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Sean McCullum
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Francine Montemurro
Marcie Mowrey
Dan Ober
Jen Petersen
Gina Pisoni
John Quimby
Melissa Roberts
Steven Rollins
Shanti Shoemaker
Doug Smart
Lisa Taylor
Heather Urquhart

103 VOLUNTEERS!

In addition to the 15 interns that spent their entire summer working on Maine islands, 103 volunteers also participated in seabird conservation projects this year. Sixty-eight assisted the Laysan Albatross monitoring work in Hawaii by watching for albatross landings several hours each week, and 35 lived on Maine islands this summer for two or more weeks.

The Hawaiian volunteers have a spectacular vantage point at Sea Life Park, a beautiful marine park looking out over the Macapuu Point on Hawaii's windward coast. Kaohikaipu Island is just one mile offshore and volunteers have an excellent view of the decoys, while watching from lawn chairs near an exhibit of captive albatross, boobies and other tropical Pacific seabirds. The volunteers scan the decoys every 15 minutes for three hours, noting the number of albatross and their behaviors. Such observations are necessary for determining the outcome of the project.

Maine coast volunteers have a more rugged experience—camping on seabird islands, sitting in cramped observation blinds, and enduring the usual mix of wind, chilling rain and penetrating fog that sometimes lasts for days. Of course, this is all balanced against living among the seabirds, participating directly in efforts to restore and protect nesting colonies and occasional *bodacious* weather.

This year's Maine volunteers came from a wide range of backgrounds. In addition to wildlife students from several universities, volunteers also included a supervising veterinary technician, a medical microbiologist, an architect, a movie set builder, a state entomologist, a university administrator, a lawyer, a law student, and a poet. However, aviculturist was the career most commonly represented. Nine volunteers from seven different aquaria and zoos donated a total of 17 weeks of

volunteer time. They work with captive puffins and penguins and benefit professionally by having the chance to study and compare their captive populations with wild puffins on Eastern Egg Rock, Seal Island, and Matinicus Rock.

This year aviculturists came from the Lincoln Park Zoo (Chicago), the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the New England Aquarium (Boston), the New York Zoological

Society, Sea World San Diego, and Sea World Orlando. Participation by aviculturists benefits the project, too. The project learned how to rear puffin chicks during the translocation era from the New York Zoological Society, and now benefits from enthusiastic volunteers to help locate nests, monitor breeding success and read leg bands.

Although project volunteers have diverse professions, they share a keen interest in birds and a desire to learn more about seabirds. They leave the program with a deeper appreciation for seabirds and a stronger commitment to conservation. ❖



Heather Urquhart (r), a volunteer from the New England Aquarium, holds a puffin fledgling at Matinicus Rock, while Becky Bishop (l) measures a wing to determine the bird's age.

Volunteers who contribute \$1,500 or more to our seabird restoration program will have the opportunity to directly assist our efforts to restore and protect Maine seabird islands. For more information on how you can spend two weeks working with and living among the seabirds, write to us before January 31st.



Art Gingert

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fratercula Fund projects are supported by the Science and Sanctuaries Divisions of the National Audubon Society—special thanks go to Susan Drennan, Frank Gill and Norm Brunswig.

We thank the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for permission to work on Eastern Egg Rock and Jenny Island, 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. We also thank Sam Hands for providing use of Hog Island and mainland Audubon Camp facilities, and Scott Saunders for his invaluable logistic support.

It is a special pleasure to acknowledge the generous assistance and gifts from the following people:

- Tom Arter, Jim Booker, Pat Cliney, John Hassett, Duryea Morton, and Don Reimer, who were volunteer naturalists aboard the Hardy III puffin cruise
- Atlantic Expeditions, John Drury, R.N. Fish & Son, Hardy Boat Cruises, Lucy LaCase, Curtis Murray, Outward Bound, Mark Sheldon, and Arthur Stackhouse for their generous assistance with logistics
- A Silver Lining of Boothbay Harbor, ME, who donated staff birdathon prizes
- Robert & Margaret Buyer of the Norton Studio, Norton, MA, for organizing 35 carvers to create 80 Common Murre decoys for Matinicus Rock
- DownEast Energy's Puffin Stops who sponsored our boat tour publicity flier and donated staff birdathon prizes
- John Drury for use of his dory at Seal Island
- Lang Elliot of NatureSound Studios for donating CDs and use of seabird sound recordings
- John Fitzpatrick and the entire staff of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for their continued cooperation with Project Puffin
- John Flood for building bird observation blinds
- Tom Grant and Harlan Redder of the Cornell University Poultry Department for their assistance in obtaining quail eggs
- Jack & Fay Hart for providing water and a place to park for the Pond Island crew
- Hawaii Audubon Society, Dave Smith of the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Ken McDermond of the USFWS for their assistance with the Hawaii albatross project, and the Pacific Remote National Wildlife Refuge staff for assistance at Kaohikaipu Island
- J. Kavaliauskas and her students from S. Portland High Environmental Club for collecting debris from the Stratton Island beaches
- Ralph and Colleen Keyes, and Robert Duffey for duty as wardens at Pond Island and Stratton Island respectively during intern-training
- Mike LaJoy for sharing his electronic wizardry
- Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lee for the gracious hospitality they provide to the Stratton Island interns
- Moss Tents for loaning an Optimum 200 tent for use on Stratton Island
- Prout's Neck Audubon Society and the Prout's Neck Women's Auxiliary for donating a Swarovski spotting scope, two Bogen tripods, a portable VHF radio, and cellular phone service
- Eliot Robinson for assistance with our field computers
- Godfrey Rockefeller and Herb Pratt for always pulling through when the Stratton Island staff call for assistance
- Sea Life Park staff on Oahu, HI, for providing our volunteers with a place to view albatross
- The Seguin Island caretakers— Harry, Lawrence, Rachel, and Anna Denkers for their hospitality to the Pond Island crew
- Camilla Sewall and Stephanie Cox for opening their home to our Pond Island staff
- Stan Skutek and the staff of Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge for assistance and enthusiastic support of our work at Seal Island NWR
- Clark Smith and the staff of the Prout's Neck Yacht Club for their assistance with Stratton Island logistics
- Diane Tessaglia and Ken Schlather for all their computer assistance
- Helen and Chris Tupper and Scott Dunning for their assistance and hospitality they offer to our Jenny Island staff
- US National Guard in Augusta, ME, for loaning night-vision goggles

*Protecting Maine seabird sanctuaries requires vision with a long view to the future.
Please consider including a bequest to the Maine seabird sanctuaries in your will
to insure that seabirds will always find sanctuary at their nesting islands.
Please write for our free brochure on bequests to the National Audubon Society.*

1995-1996 CONTRIBUTORS

SPECIAL GIFTS

In Memory of Michael A. Apgar

Jean Apgar through the Michael A. Apgar Memorial Fund

In Memory of Mannie Gilbert

John & Marrene Boeren
Jim & Deanna Gregory
Judy Grover

In Memory of Jean Hamlin

Muriel L. Wilhelm

In Memory of Melville H. Ireland

Mrs. William C. Coughlan
Kate Ireland
The Ireland Foundation
Robert C. Webster Jr. & Family

In Memory of Clara H. Lebovitz

The Clara H. Lebovitz Maine Coast Sanctuary Internship Fund

In Memory of Andrew Zergenyi

Ilda Rangan

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\$1,500-\$4,999

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The Spellissy Foundation
West Marine Products
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Maine Yankee Power
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Gerrish H. Milliken Foundation
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Bayard D. & Liz Rea
Naomi Schalit.
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Alan Devoe Bird Club
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