



Seabird Island News

Volume 1

June 4, 2017

Seabirds

Puffins

The Puffins are back! Our researchers and avid Puffin cam watchers alike have confirmed eggs deep in the rocky granite burrows on our islands – one egg per nesting pair. On June 1st, while making a visit to Eastern Egg Rock, Steve Kress spotted the first puffin with a bill load of fish, a sure sign that a chick has hatched and is receiving food. This is almost a full week earlier than recent years. The effects of climate change and puffin forage fish were the subject of a Chanel 13 TV [interview](#) at Egg Rock with Steve Kress.

Terns

Unlike puffins, Maine terns nest on the surface of the ground and are particularly susceptible to predators such as gulls, raptors, and mink.

Researchers arriving on many of the islands found evidence of predation and set about to protect the birds. A Great Horned Owl on Jenny Island was caught and removed for relocation



away from the island, underscoring the importance of our watchful presence on the islands. Tern courtship continues, and eggs are being laid daily with males enticing the females with gifts of small fish.

Other Bird News

- Eider chicks have been observed on several islands where hens lay up to 10 large greenish eggs in a down protected nest.
- Seventy Razorbills were counted at one time on Seal Island NWR and at least 22 nest burrow upon last count. They have also been seen prospecting nesting sites at Eastern Egg Rock.
- Migratory sightings include purple sandpipers, a horned lark, red-eyed vireos, and Kentucky and Mourning warblers.
- The Seal Island NWR Red-billed Tropic Bird is back!



Island Life

Our island researchers braved the wet chilly weather in late May and are now settling into each of their respective seven islands. They've had to ensure their tents are tied down and protected from the coastal winds and rain. It took several attempts and lots of boat rowing to successfully land on the islands, bringing all the required gear, water and food from the mainland.

They have been working to get bird blinds constructed, clearing invasive vegetation and marine debris from tern-nesting areas and brushing up on research protocols. The island teams have been busy counting numbers of birds and nests while marking out areas in the seabird colonies called "productivity plots" in order to monitor nests, eggs, and chicks in order to see growth and reproductive patterns.

The island field season has begun!