Seabird Island News

Volume 2
June 3, 2018

Seabirds

Puffins

Most puffins on Seal Island NWR, Matinicus Rock and Eastern Egg Rock now have eggs and the hatch watch has started, especially at Egg Rock where hatching typically occurs first. The Egg Rock team identified six of our returning Adopt-a-Puffin stars so far. Other alcid news includes Common Murres coming and going from under Matinicus Rock boulders – could they be nesting?

Terns

Terns continue to lay eggs and the island teams have set up fenced productivity plots around a sample of nests on each island to measure nesting success. They are also observing courtship feeding to see what foods the terns are catching. One particularly protective tern dive-bombed a researcher on Stratton Island, depositing a small herring on her shoulder in the attack! The southern seabird islands are reporting plenty of nutritious fish, but they are also finding some low quality fish such as butterfish, lumpfish, and pufferfish. It is too early to know if this is an issue.

The Egg Rock team has counted 56 Arctic Tern and 28 Roseate Tern nests in addition to numerous Common Terns and Stratton Island reported 50 Least Tern nests so far.

Other Bird News

• Avian predators continue to visit all of the islands, but Pond Island seems to have more than its share. Visits from Bald Eagles and Peregrines are the rule, but the Pond Island team was surprised when their Great Horned Owl trap captured a Snowy Owl – only the 4th occurrence on our islands. A headless tern (remains of an owl kill) was found nearby. The owl will be released far from the island.

• Seal Island NWR reports ‘Troppy’ the Red-billed Tropic Bird is back for its 14th summer.

• Birds of note this week include a Black Tern at Eastern Egg Rock, an Indigo Bunting and Parasitic Jaeger at Stratton Island, along with a White-Rumped Sandpiper and two King Eiders at Seal Island NWR.

• Stratton Island completed an arduous Common Eider census, finding a whopping 553 nests, up from the previous census of 306 in 2015.

Island Life

Jenny Island found a mysterious message in a bottle. “Help me Matt!” was scrawled on the message. Just one of our island mysteries...

Lauren Lescure, Pond Island NWR Supervisor (left) and Natalie Booth from Hobart and William Smith Colleges with a Snowy Owl captured in the tern colony. Photo: Pond Island.

The mysterious note uncorked. Photo: Jenny Island