

Seabird Island News

Volume 10

31 July – 14 August 2017

Seabirds

Puffins

Eastern Egg Rock ended the season with 173 nesting puffin pairs-up from 150 pairs last year. Eastern Egg Rock, Matinicus Rock and Seal Island NWR all reported hundreds of pairs rafting near shore (Seal Island broke its all-time high count with 1,012 puffins on August 11). Soon after, the flocks departed for wintering grounds with just a few individuals remaining. It was a good year for Maine puffins because of sufficient forage fish for chicks.



A rare sighting of a fledgling Atlantic Puffin chick "exercising" before its night time departure to sea. The dark-faced chicks typically leave at night when they are safer from predators. Photo: Eastern Egg Rock Team

Terns

Terns have also mostly left their island colonies with the exception of a few late nesting pairs. It was a record year for tern nest counts on Jenny Island, Outer Green and Pond Island NWR, but food supplies were variable and sometimes insufficient.

Other Bird News

Gulf of Maine Seabird Working Group (GOMSWG). Researchers from throughout the Gulf of Maine gathered at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen on 11 August for the 34th annual meeting of seabird researchers in the area. The meeting provides a forum to share Island reports and research by state, federal and non-profit entities that manage seabird populations.

Watchful eyes. As blinds come down and island staff begin to leave, we are reminded of the importance of our presence. The Seal Island NWR team has already spotted visiting Bald Eagles and the Matinicus Rock team reported a gathering of 400 Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls on the island. Migrating Northern Harriers and Peregrine Falcons have also been keeping the remaining birds and staff on alert!

Sightings. Matinicus Rock reported a Herring Gull that had been tagged in Massachusetts during a study about gulls on reservoirs. Seal Island continues to report jaegers and gannets and estimates 60 Great Cormorant chicks this year- an excellent year for this state-threatened species. The Seal Island team has tallied 173 bird species with fall migration just beginning! Before closing, Stratton Island reported Marbled Godwits, a Short-billed Dowitcher and a Stilt Sandpiper.

A Pigeon? The Seal Island NWR team took in a very hungry Canadian racing pigeon. The team is helping it recover before it returns to Canada.

Island Life

All islands are now closed except for Matinicus Rock and Seal Island NWR. Whether it was one last night camping under the stars with their crew, or a puffin inspired pie, these close-knit teams have bid the islands adieu. Thanks to all our summer researchers who made the season such a success for the birds!



Pie tribute to Puffins. Photo: Eastern Egg Rock