

Seabird Island News

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Seabirds

While the terns have largely departed the seabird islands and started their long migrations, small field teams continue to monitor the puffins, guillemots, cormorants, and shorebirds that still remain on the islands.

Puffins

The puffin chicks that survived the downturn in food availability in July and early August have recently seen a resurgence in the food supply, leading to increased weight gain before their departures to the sea. Puffin chick Grace (of the Explore.org nest cam), typical of other chicks, had a 50% increase in body weight over the past two weeks!



Puffin chick Grace on the August 8 (left) and August 21 (right). At 60 days old, she has stayed in the burrow more than two weeks longer than normal, but the extended burrow stay and longer than usual parental care strategy seems to have paid off. Photos: Seal Island NWR Team

Cormorants

32 pairs of Great Cormorants (a rare and threatened breeder in the state of Maine) nested on Seal Island this year in a mixed colony with Double-crested Cormorants. 64 Great Cormorant chicks were counted on August 17, for an average of 2 chicks fledged per pair. This is certainly a successful year for them! The field crew on Seal Island will continue to protect Great Cormorants

until the majority have dispersed away from the island in the middle of September.



Great Cormorants at Seal Island; Matinicus Rock in the distance. Photo: Seal Island NWR

Island Life

As fall migration continues, teams on Seal Island, Stratton Island, and Matinicus Rock are conducting shorebird surveys and searching for migrating songbirds (good sightings include Blue-winged Warbler, Cape May Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat). These late-season bird monitors are also completing much needed maintenance work, such as invasive vegetation control, marine debris clean-up, and repainting buildings.



The team poses with a pile of marine debris they collected on Little Stratton Island. Photo: Stratton Island Team