

Dr. Stephen Kress, Project Puffin Founder, Retires

After decades of groundbreaking seabird restoration, conservation hero and Vice-President of Bird Conservation at National Audubon Society, Dr. Stephen Kress announced his well-earned retirement. Steve joined Hog Island Audubon Camp, Maine in 1969 as a bird life instructor. Fifty years later, he leaves a legacy of seabird conservation that spans the globe.

Steve earned worldwide recognition for his successful use of translocation and social attraction techniques using bird decoys, sound recordings, and mirrors to attract and reintroduce Atlantic Puffins to the island of Eastern Egg Rock off the coast of Maine. In addition to repopulating Eastern Egg Rock, Steve's perseverance helped grow the U.S. population of Atlantic Puffins to more than 1,000 nesting pairs on five islands in the Gulf of Maine. His work, through the Seabird Restoration Program, has now restored nesting colonies for at least 42,000 seabirds in Maine and 49 seabird species in 14 countries. He has also taught and influenced hundreds of students, conservationists, and scientists from more than a dozen countries through internships, and inspired thousands of conservation leaders of all ages at the Hog Island Audubon Camp, where he served as instructor and director.

Steve's early puffin work sparked imaginations and earned a featured spot in the 1970s TV show, *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*. In 1987, Steve was awarded the Rolex Award for Enterprise. Audubon honored Steve in 2010 with the Golden Egret Award and in 2014 with a peer-nominated Charles H. Callison Award for "remarkable contributions to conservation through coalition-building, creative thinking, and perseverance." Steve told about this incredible conservation journey in his book, *Project Puffin*, published in 2015 with co-author Derrick Jackson. He has also been a course instructor at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, for several decades where he shared his bird knowledge with hundreds more students.

"Through dedication and perseverance, Steve is an amazing example of how one person can change the world. He not only accomplished the unthinkable—reintroducing Atlantic Puffins to several of Maine's coastal islands—but he also pioneered the idea of seabird restoration around the globe."

—Dr. Karen Hyun, Vice-President for Coasts, National Audubon Society.



RYAN DAVID BROWN

We thank you, Steve!

It is his deep commitment to sharing his knowledge and inspiring the next generations, coupled with his lifelong research to restore seabird populations, that will help ensure a successful future for birds throughout the world.

Seabird Restoration Program

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FOHI Volunteer Coordinator: Tony Ferrara
119 dedicated FOHI volunteers

Egg Rock Update Staff

Authors: Tiffany Huenefeldt, Don Lyons
Editors: Rosalie V. Borzik, Tiffany Huenefeldt, Stephen W. Kress, Paula Shannon
Design: DIANETH Designs, dianeth.com

The 2019 Maine Research Team



DEREK Z. JACKSON

Front row: (left to right): Kevin Mardell; Siyu Wang*; Stephen Kress; Rose Borzik; Debbie Wood; Tiffany Huenefeldt; Andreinna Morán Alvarez* **Second Row:** Nicole Faber*; Keenan Yakola*; Anna Baker; Tracey Faber*; Mary Kathryn Devers*; Hannah Baird*; Penelope Murphy*; Amanda Trent*; Jasmine Lee; Michael Rickershauser*; Sean Hardison (NOAA Scientific Data Analyst, Keynote Speaker, SRP Staff Training)
Third Row: Will Kennerley*; Eva Matthews Lark; Sarah Guitart*; Sarah Joy Kwiatkowski; Aidan Griffiths; Dallas Jordan*; Sophia Salzer; Sue Schubel; Paula Shannon **Fourth Row:** Don Lyons; Nathaniel Smith; Kathleen Laura Sterup*; Parker Davis*; Anna Nellis Smith*; Sam Wells; Caitlin Bowman*; Henry Leggett
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Seabird Restoration Program is a part of the Science Division of the National Audubon Society. We especially thank Gary Langham and Karen Hyun for their guidance. We also thank John Fitzpatrick and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology staff for continued cooperation. It is with deep gratitude for their support and advice, that we thank members of the Seabird Advisory Council.

In addition, we thank Brad Allen, Kelsey Sullivan and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for permission and logistic support for our work on Eastern Egg Rock, Jenny Island and Outer Green Island. We also thank Brian Benedict, Eddy Edwards, Michael Langlois, Linda Welch and the staff of Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge for their continued cooperation for our studies on Seal Island NWR, Pond Island NWR and Matinicus Rock. Robert Houston, biologist for the USFWS Gulf of Maine Program graciously provided mapping and field support. We also thank the Prout's Neck Audubon Society for their loyal support for our work on Stratton Island.

We thank the following for their generous assistance and gifts

Avian Haven
Asher Bird
Hilde Bird
Dave Corbeau, Harbormaster, Pine Point, Maine
Adam DiNuovo
Terry Dunning
Michael Fahay
Sandy Flint
Friends of Hog Island
Walter & Ann Gamble
Terry Goodhue
Gunnar Gunderson and Lincoln County Rifle Club
Jean Hall
Anthony Hill
Debbie Jackson and Prout's Neck Association.
Derrick Z. Jackson
Kieve-Wavus Education
Lucy LaCasse
Orange Circuit Fitness, Brunswick, Maine

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Prout's Neck Audubon Society
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Carol Taylor
Cricket and Chris Tupper
Alan Twombly, Harbormaster, Falmouth, Maine
Steve Wallace
E. John White
Rick and John Woodruff



KATHRYN DEVERS BY JEAN HALL

What's for Dinner?

Poop collected on special hats in Common Tern colonies will reveal prey species consumed by terns, as identified from the DNA in each sample. See more about this study on page 5.

State of the Ecosystem Report

Audubon Data Represents Seabirds In the Gulf of Maine

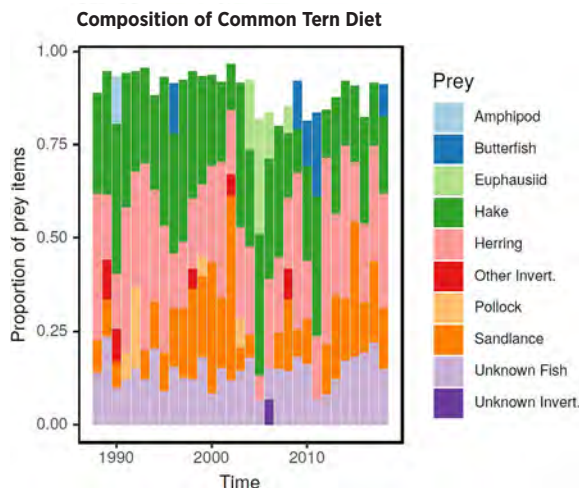
In September 2018, the New England Fishery Management Council was considering changes in the management of the Atlantic Herring fishery throughout New England. In a well-timed op-ed piece for the Portland Press Herald (Maine), Seabird Restoration Program (SRP) founder Steve Kress advocated for the needs of puffins just as fisheries managers were considering adjustments to herring harvest levels. Bolstered by letters from many Audubon activists around the country, fisheries managers listened. The Council decided to immediately reduce harvest levels and propose a more cautious “control rule” for the Atlantic herring fishery. While the new rules are not quite as cautious as seabird advocates were hoping for, they were a significant step in the right direction.

The benefits of this outreach did not stop there, however. Dr. Scott Large, a scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, read the op-ed letter and reached out to SRP about incorporating SRP’s seabird data into his group’s annual ecosystem assessment of the Gulf of Maine. Published as “State of the Ecosystem” (SOE) reports, these assessments bring together many different types of ocean data: water temperatures and currents, plankton densities, fish concentrations, whale abundance, and social and economic factors like the diversity and financial value of commercial and recreational fishing landings. NOAA delivers SOE reports to each regional Fishery Management Council to inform decision makers on the status of marine ecosystems relative to past years. Long-term datasets—like those developed by SRP on seabird diet and productivity—are key to assessing the ecosystem’s annual status. SRP is well positioned to voice the seabird perspective.

We focused on contributing Common Tern productivity and diet for the 2019 report (reporting conditions through the summer of 2018). Common Terns are a particularly appropriate sentinel species as they are not dietary specialists—they consume a wide variety of fish prey found at the surface and are widely distributed. Common Terns feed their chicks a good representation of the fish present in much of the Gulf of Maine. Stretching back to 1988, it is one of our most robust datasets.

Two important conclusions we have recognized in recent warm-water years were stressed in the interpretation of our tern data within the larger report: more unfavorable fish like butterfish were included in chick diets and lower chick survival overall. These lessons are not necessarily new, but were particularly notable in 2018, a very warm year. The SOE report is the perfect vehicle to convey this information to fishery managers, many of whom may not be regularly exposed to non-fish focused perspectives on the marine ecosystem. Now they can consider the needs of birds more readily than ever before.

SRP’s next contribution to SOE will include diet data from Atlantic Puffins that dive and feed on fish at a variety of depths. Our Gulf of Maine seabird partners from the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Shoals Marine Lab also plan to add their Common Tern data to the report. Beyond the Gulf of Maine, we are working to facilitate data contributions to the Mid-Atlantic SOE report by seabird colleagues in that region. Collectively, these efforts to inform fisheries management are an excellent example of our expanding objectives as we grow into a more broadly focused Seabird Institute. Stay tuned for more fish connections in the future!



Seabird Institute Created

The Kress legacy of seabird restoration work will continue with the formation of a Seabird Institute under the leadership of Dr. Donald Lyons, whose career has closely aligned with Audubon’s Seabird Restoration Program. Don spent the last 20 years at Oregon State University working on seabird science and conservation. His background as an electrical engineer and seabird biologist helps him further research on tracking seabird foraging, dispersal, and migration using both banding and electronic tagging. He joined the program last year as its Director of Conservation Science and will take on a new leadership role, directing the Institute’s research to inform smart policy around critical issues affecting seabirds and the places they need. Tiffany Huenefeldt will continue her role as Managing Director. Underscoring the importance of this work, an anonymous National Audubon Society board member has invested \$1 million in the new Seabird Institute. This will enable Audubon to build on Dr. Kress’ conservation legacy that will accelerate Audubon’s marine science, conservation and policy work throughout the hemisphere. It will help support Audubon’s leadership role in addressing the precipitously declining populations of seabirds and forage fish they depend on for survival.

COMMON TERN BY ZEKE SMITH



Seabird Diets and Ocean Warming

The Seabird Restoration Program has documented seabird breeding success, chick growth, and the composition of chick diets for years. Such long-term datasets are rare in applied conservation. In September, the scientific journal *Marine Ecology Progress Series* (MEPS) published a study that analyzes this data. It reports on the reproductive success of Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, and Common Murres when high-quality prey are less available due to warming waters in the Gulf of Maine. The study also underscores the critical importance of protecting and restoring forage fish populations along our coasts as climate change increases global ocean temperatures.

When the data were examined, significant changes in chick diet were seen across the study period for all three seabird species—the changes coincide with major temperature increases. Razorbills and murres needed and were more able to maintain a consistent diet of high-quality forage fish than puffins, which more frequently shifted to exploiting lower-quality, but more readily available food during shortages of high-quality prey. However, due to their longer breeding season, puffin reproductive output was much more vulnerable to ocean warming. In



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The reproductive success of puffins and other seabirds depends on finding quality fish in warming oceans. Puffins more readily switched their diet than Razorbills or murres, but their foraging success was more sensitive to marine heat waves due to the longer time they take to raise their chicks in the burrow.



JEAN HALL

other words, because puffin chicks take longer to leave the nest and head to sea to forage on their own, “pufflings” are more susceptible to longer periods of low-quality fish. The findings show that these three seabird species would benefit from stronger management of forage fish populations to secure healthy populations during marine heatwaves. High-quality prey like herring and sand lance are not only an important food source for seabirds, but also for the whole marine food web. Healthy, diverse stocks of forage fish are especially important when warmer waters push high-quality forage fish into deeper water and further from land.

The MEPS paper was authored by Seabird Restoration Program scientists and colleagues at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) using long-term SRP data from Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (SINWR) and Matinicus Rock, as well as UNB data from Machias Seal Island at the U.S.-Canada border. Research at SINWR and Matinicus Rock was conducted in collaboration and support from the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge, supporters of the Audubon Seabird Restoration Program, and notably, the Annenberg Foundation. Analyses and manuscript preparation were completed with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Razorbills feed their chicks for a shorter amount of time in the burrow because the chicks fledge sooner, making them less susceptible to marine heat waves than puffins.

Access the full article at www.int-res.com/articles/meps_oa/m626p177.pdf

Where Do Puffins Find Food For Pufflings?

This summer the Seabird Restoration Program embarked on a donor-funded pilot project to find out where Matinicus Rock seabirds find food for their young. By learning where puffins and other seabirds forage in both cool and warm years, we will better understand the effects of a warming climate, and identify areas where cautious fisheries management is needed. A new generation of miniaturized GPS tracking devices are now available that weigh as little as a dime (2.5 grams). These tags are small enough to tape onto a puffin's back feathers without negatively affecting its ability to fly and dive. Logging data internally—rather than including components to transmit data to satellites or the cell phone network—keeps the tags light, but means the tagged puffins must be recaptured and the tag removed to obtain the tracking location data. The Matinicus Rock puffin colony was chosen for the pilot effort because it offered the most shallow, accessible burrows for recaptures.

The tracking effort began in early July once the first chicks were two weeks old and completed a month later in early August. During that period, hardworking research assistants obtained data from over 300 locations where tagged puffins were foraging, commuting, or rafting on the ocean surface. A few of these locations were over 20 miles from the Matinicus Rock colony! Most were much closer; however, about half were within five miles. Locations were generally south or southeast of the colony, indicating movements further out into the Gulf of Maine and away from shore.

Fecal (poop) samples were also collected from the tagged puffins when recaptured and shared with Gemma Clucas, a geneticist at Cornell University. DNA in the fecal sample will identify prey species consumed during the tracking period and connect locations to particular types of prey.

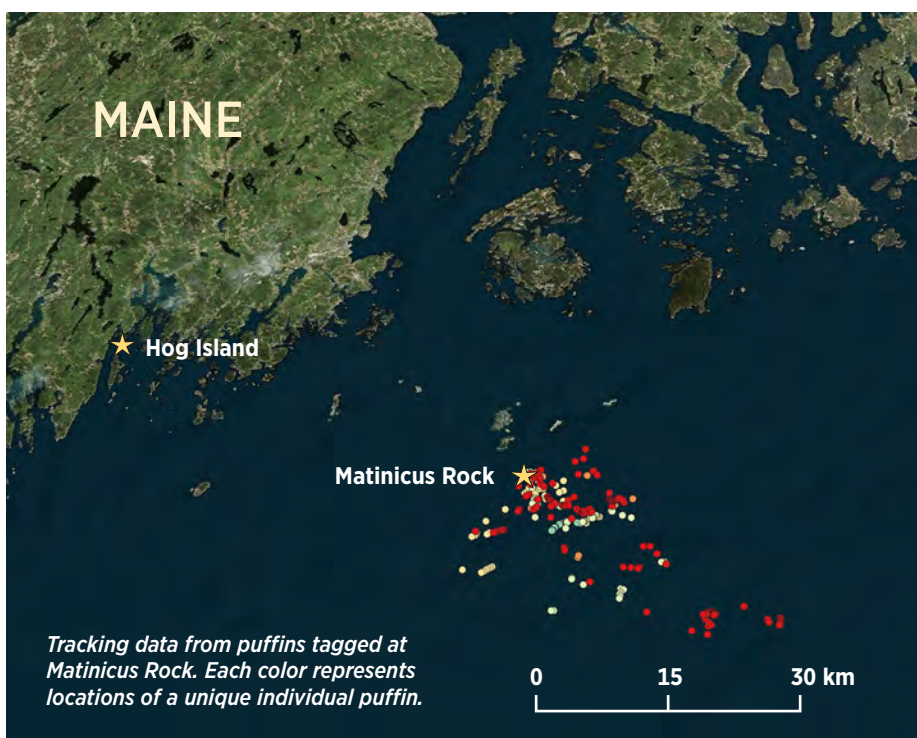
Given the success of this pilot project, an expanded tagging effort is planned for the 2020 field season. Additional data, and data across years of differing conditions, will greatly enhance our understanding—and that of regional fishery managers—of how climate change challenges puffins and other seabirds, and impacts their key forage fish, including Atlantic herring.



CLARE EVANS

The tag is attached to the puffin's feathers with tape.

A tagged puffin brings back food for its chick on Matinicus Rock.



Tracking data from puffins tagged at Matinicus Rock. Each color represents locations of a unique individual puffin.

Season Summary

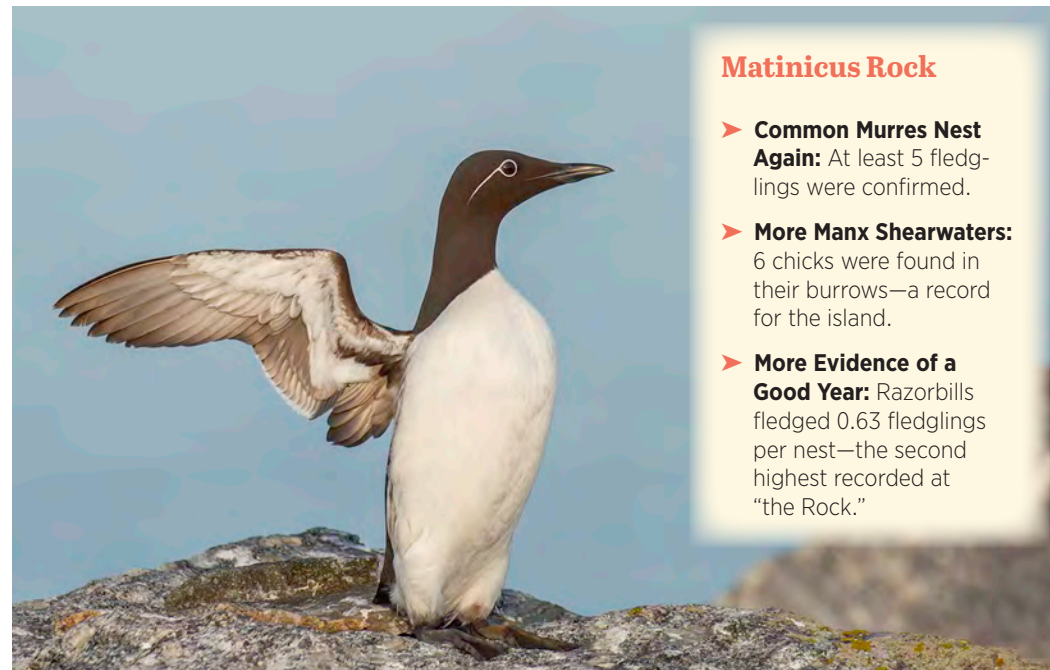
2019 MAINE ISLAND HIGHLIGHTS



Eastern Egg Rock

- **Puffin Colony Record:** 188 active puffin burrows were counted.
- **First Visit by a Member of Congress:** Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree visited the island in August.
- **Habitat and Gull Management Benefits Terns:** 1,067 Common Tern pairs nested—the highest count since 2008.

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Matinicus Rock

- **Common Murres Nest Again:** At least 5 fledglings were confirmed.
- **More Manx Shearwaters:** 6 chicks were found in their burrows—a record for the island.
- **More Evidence of a Good Year:** Razorbills fledged 0.63 fledglings per nest—the second highest recorded at “the Rock.”

COMMON MURRE BY JEAN HALL



RAZORBILL BY JEAN HALL

Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge

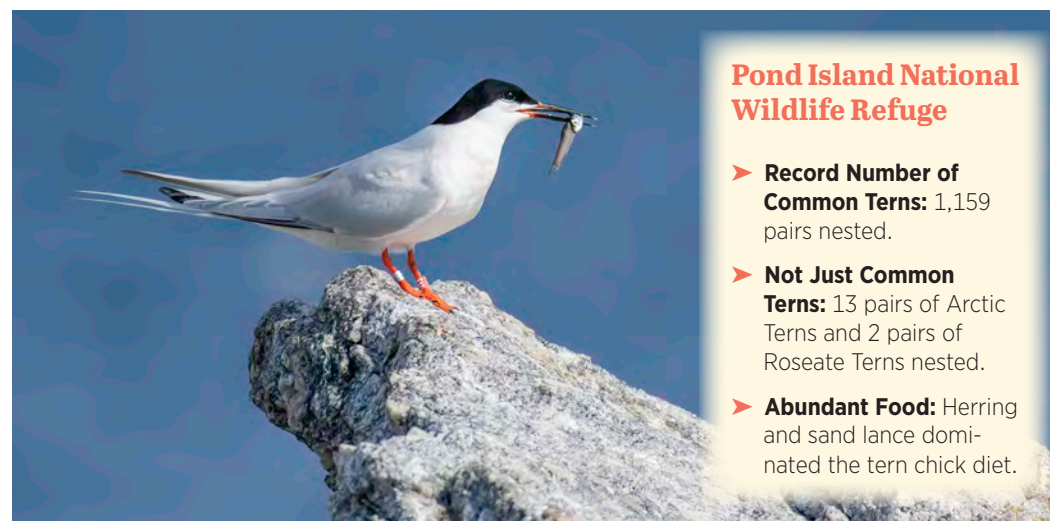
- **Alcid Numbers Climb:** 60 active Razorbill burrows were found and an estimated 573 puffin pairs nested.
- **Tern Tracking in Partnership with USFWS:** Common and Arctic Terns fitted with GPS trackers provided insight into tern foraging locations and behavior.
- **“Troppey” is Back:** The Red-Billed Tropicbird, back for another summer, survived a brush with the only bush on the island when avoiding mobbing terns.



Jenny Island

- **A Banner Year for Terns:** 1,618 Common Tern pairs nested—a new record for the island.
- **A Return Visitor:** A Great Horned Owl trapped and relocated to western Maine in 2011 returned to the island. It was captured and relocated farther away.
- **Chicks Well Fed:** A diet of herring, hake, and sand lance fueled high fledging success.

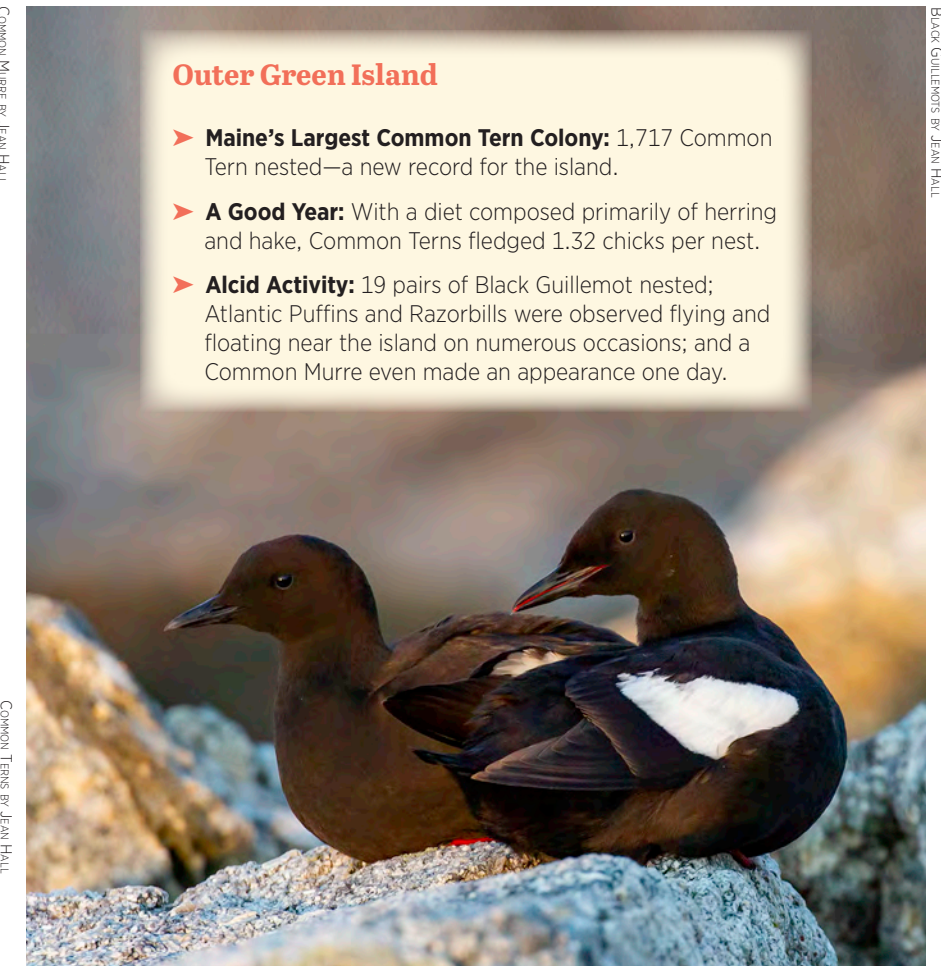
COMMON TERNS BY JEAN HALL



Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge

- **Record Number of Common Terns:** 1,159 pairs nested.
- **Not Just Common Terns:** 13 pairs of Arctic Terns and 2 pairs of Roseate Terns nested.
- **Abundant Food:** Herring and sand lance dominated the tern chick diet.

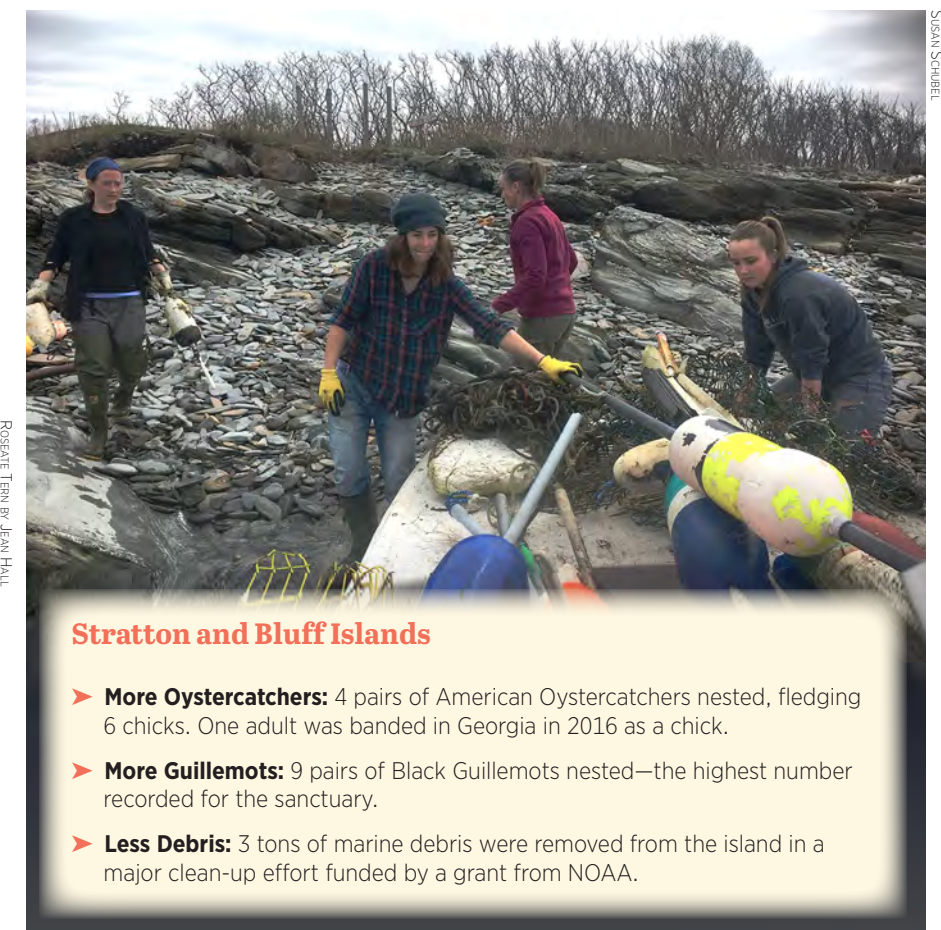
ROSEATE TERN BY JEAN HALL



BLACK GUILLEMOTS BY JEAN HALL

Outer Green Island

- **Maine's Largest Common Tern Colony:** 1,717 Common Tern nested—a new record for the island.
- **A Good Year:** With a diet composed primarily of herring and hake, Common Terns fledged 1.32 chicks per nest.
- **Alcid Activity:** 19 pairs of Black Guillemot nested; Atlantic Puffins and Razorbills were observed flying and floating near the island on numerous occasions; and a Common Murre even made an appearance one day.



SUSAN SCHABEL

Stratton and Bluff Islands

- **More Oystercatchers:** 4 pairs of American Oystercatchers nested, fledging 6 chicks. One adult was banded in Georgia in 2016 as a chick.
- **More Guillemots:** 9 pairs of Black Guillemots nested—the highest number recorded for the sanctuary.
- **Less Debris:** 3 tons of marine debris were removed from the island in a major clean-up effort funded by a grant from NOAA.

Education and Outreach

Lights, Camera, Action

Drama and community science marked summer 2019 on the explore.org cams! Cam fan Julie Wallace chronicled parental feedings and visits from other puffins to Bucky, the puffin chick in Seal Island NWR's burrow #59. Thanks to the dedicated care by his parents (one of whom was injured), Bucky successfully fledged on August 8. It took more than 316 deliveries of 1,337 fish (mostly haddock and hake) to raise puffling Bucky!

On Hog Island, despite a family of stylish mannequins intended as deterrents, osprey star Rachel once again squared off against a Great Horned Owl. Rachel sustained a foot injury during the season, and her mate Steve took on much of the feeding of the remaining chick, Hailey, who fledged on August 3. A big shout out to Regina Hornung and the other dedicated osprey viewers!

We wish Bucky and Hailey safe journeys and happy returns.

explore.org

LUKE FRANKIE (2)

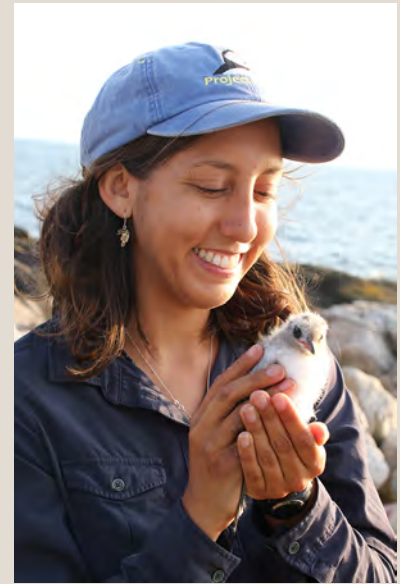
Puffin Boat Tours



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The summer 2019 schedule increased to over 125 Project Puffin narrated puffin-watching trips and the passenger number had an uptick of 15%! Hardy Boat and Cap'n Fish boat lines took over 10,500 visitors on viewing trips to Eastern Egg Rock—a lot of people for the puffins to view!

Learn more at
projectpuffin.audubon.org/puffin-tours



STEPHEN W. KRESS

Andreinna Morán Alvarez holds a Common Tern chick being prepped for weighing and measuring.

2019 Josephine Daneman Herz International Seabird Fellows

The Seabird Restoration Program welcomed four Josephine Daneman Herz International Fellows to Maine in 2019. These four talented scientists joined Project Puffin's program in Maine to exchange knowledge, culture and expertise with our researchers. Joining us were **Anely Fernández Robeldo** and **Luis Ángel Méndez Rosas**, biologists working with seabirds for Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas, in México on Guadalupe Island; **Andreinna del Rocio Morán Alvarez**, a graduate of the University of Quayaquil, Ecuador with Nazca Booby, Waved Albatross and Vermillion Flycatcher research experience on the Galapagos Islands; and **Siyu Wang**, curator at the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History and team member of the critically endangered Chinese Crested Tern Restoration Project.



DANIEL ROBY

Chinese Crested Tern

Making Seabird Friends

The Project Puffin Visitor Center on Main Street in Rockland, Maine, reached an all-time season high number of visitors. The Center offered eight weeks of children's science and evening lecture programs, and wildlife art exhibits by Michael Boardman and Keenan Yakola. It is also a popular destination for cruise ship tourists in port. The team greeted over 6,443 visitors from 9 countries to the Center—a 17% increase over 2018!



Audubon

Project Puffin
Visitor Center



Susie Meadows, Project Puffin Visitor Center manager, talks with visitors.

Adopt a Puffin Today!



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For each \$100 donation, you can enroll in our Adopt-A-Puffin program. We will assign an Atlantic Puffin to you, complete with the puffin's photo, biography and a certificate of adoption personalized with your name.

Puffin adoptions also make great gifts! We are happy to personalize the adoption certificate with the recipient's name.

Don't wait! Adopt a puffin to learn about these endearing seabirds while supporting their conservation. Learn more at projectpuffin.audubon.org.



Audubon

Hog Island
Audubon Camp

New at **Hog Island Audubon Camp**: Seabirds, Plants, and Pollinators

Audubon continued its 83-year camp tradition at Hog Island this summer with seasonal favorites such as "Field Ornithology," "Arts and Birding," "Joy of Birding," and "Raptor Rapture" to reach 439 campers—a new participation record.

Some of the country's best-known naturalists and ornithologists—such as **Scott Weidensaul**, **Richard Crossly**, **Holly Merker**, and **Pete Dunne**—joined the Hog Island team for these bird-packed courses.

New 2019 Sessions

- **Puffin Islands:** Headliner Steve Kress shared the world of seabirds in Maine and abroad.
- **Creating Bird-friendly Habitats:** Doug Tallamy, along with partners from Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, explored how to use native plants to attract backyard birds and pollinators.
- **Tropical Teen Week:** The bird fun went farther afield to Costa Rica, with a session offered in partnership with the American Birding Association.



LUKE FRANKS

Check out the 2020 Schedule at hogisland.audubon.org

Join us next summer for another season of Hog Island's world-class programming. You'll be glad you did!

2018–2019 Contributors

Contributions listed were received from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019. Space restrictions prevent us from listing our 1,568 Supporter-level friends. Every donor is important to us and we sincerely regret any omissions. Your continuing participation makes our work possible.



\$50,000–\$101,500

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In Memorium: Duryea Morton (1924–2019)

Duryea (Dur) Morton served Audubon as a naturalist, educator, and vice president of education for most of his career. In 1963, he hired Stephen Kress as a 16-year-old student assistant at the Audubon Camp of Connecticut and later invited Steve to Maine to teach bird life at the Hog Island Audubon Camp where Dur served as director from 1970 to 1976. This period spanned the beginning of Project Puffin, during which he provided encouragement and a base of operations at Hog Island. With his wife, Peggy, the Mortons created the **Duryea and Peggy Morton Seabird Internship Fund** in 2010 to provide training for promising early-career conservation biologists on Maine seabird sanctuaries. So far, 18 seabird stewards have received internships. Duryea requested that all memorial gifts go to the Duryea and Peggy Morton Internship Fund upon his death on May 6, 2019, and bequeathed a contribution to the Morton Seabird Internship Fund and Hog Island endowment.



Courtesy of Peggy Morton

With pleasure we acknowledge the contributions from:

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Project Puffin

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Mad River Decoys by Audubon are now available for purchase through the Project Puffin Visitor Center online store. Find these and other seabird-themed gifts at shop.projectpuffin.org

Made in Bremen, Maine



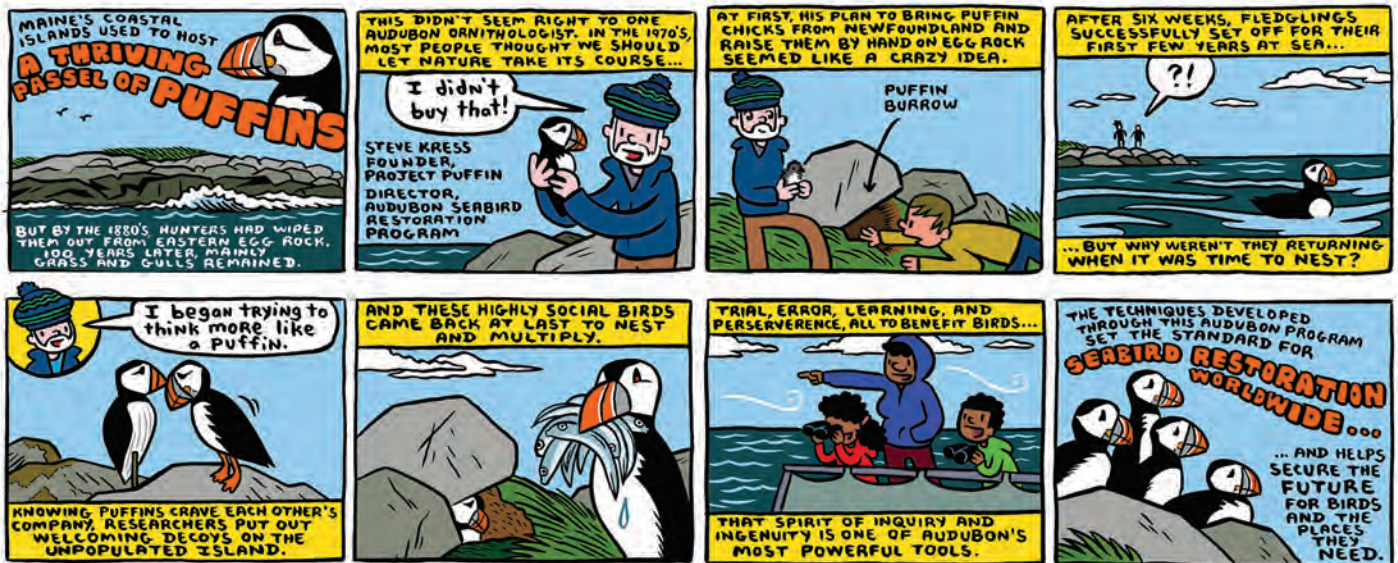
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Jean Hall

With the addition of the following paragraph to your will, you can leave a legacy for seabirds through the Seabird Restoration Program: Project Puffin Endowment Fund.

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This comic first appeared on National Audubon Society's Facebook page in October, 2016.