



# Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program  
of the National Audubon Society

2001



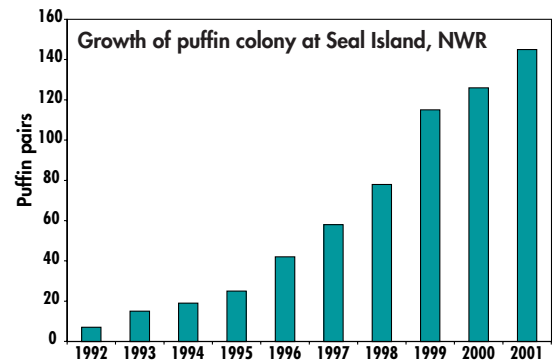
## A BANNER YEAR FOR PUFFINS!

*Puffins lounge among decoys at the South Point loafing ledge on Seal Island N.W.R.*

STEPHEN W. KRESS

### SEAL ISLAND: COLONY UP 15%

The restored puffin colony on Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (SINWR) expanded this summer both in numbers and territory. The growth contributes to a dramatic nine-year increase from just seven pairs in 1992 to 145 pairs this summer. This 15% increase from summer 2000 occurred throughout the colony, but new nests were predominant in the previously uncolonized southwestern side of the island. Among the 145 nesting pairs, researchers discovered 33 new pairs.



### EGG ROCK: 5 NEW PAIRS

The puffin colony at Eastern Egg Rock reached a record-high count of 37 pairs, including 5 new ones. Ninety-one percent of the breeding pairs from 2000 returned in 2001, as did *all* of the birds that comprise the Adopt-a-Puffin program. A surprise was the return of 24-year-old Y22, who was missing in summer 2000 and assumed dead. Nesting success was excellent this summer, with 88% of the pairs successfully fledging their single chick. This new generation bodes well for future growth of the colony.

### MATINICUS ROCK: OLDEST KNOWN PUFFIN

The distinction of “oldest surviving translocated puffin” belongs to 26-year-old “White 14,” who was found brooding his chick at Matinicus Rock NWR among about 300 other pairs of puffins. He was brought from Newfoundland to Eastern Egg Rock as a 15-day-old chick in 1975 and has nested in the same burrow nearly every year since 1980. He was in strapping good health but his leg bands were severely worn. On July 13<sup>th</sup>, he received his fifth set of special, corrosion-resistant metal bands. ❖

### SEAL ISLAND PUFFIN RESTORATION MILESTONES

- 1887**—Original puffin population extirpated due to overhunting
- 1984 to 1989**—950 puffin chicks translocated from Newfoundland to Seal Island
- 1987**—First translocated puffin returns to Seal Island
- 1992**—First puffins nest at Seal Island (seven pairs); 71% were from Newfoundland
- 2001**—Seal Island puffin numbers increase to 145 pairs

*Sightings included: 8 puffins banded at Eastern Egg Rock (26 miles west); 80 puffins banded at Matinicus Rock (8 miles west); 6 puffins banded at Petit Manan Island (65 miles east); 19 puffins banded at Machias Seal Island (95 miles east)*

## INSIDE

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# SEABIRD RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

*The techniques developed for restoring puffins, terns and other seabirds to Maine Coast Islands are helping seabird managers in many places. Here are a few highlights from some of these programs:*

## DEVIL'S SLIDE ROCK

*Half Moon Bay, California*

The Project to restore Common Murres to Devil's Slide Rock near Half Moon Bay, California tallied a new record high of 110 nesting pairs and an additional 46 pairs holding territorial sites. Now in its sixth field season, the project has already surpassed its original goal of restoring 100 pairs. Devil's Slide Rock hosted about 2,800 birds as recently as 1982, but this important colony was lost following the 1986 spill of the *Apex Houston* oil barge. In 1996, a coordinated effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon Society and Humboldt State University launched a restoration program to bring the murres back using 400 decoys, sound recordings and mirrors. Six pairs nested in the first year of the project and most pairs continue to nest among the decoys. Nesting success was excellent this summer, with 77% of the pairs fledging a chick. ❖



*Decoys and mirrors helped bring back murres to Devil's Slide Rock near San Francisco. Photo by Mike Parker*

### **The 2001 Project Murre Team**

LEADER: Mike Parker

CREW: Brian Acord, Christine Caurant, Christine Hamilton, Nathan Jones, Hugh Knechtel

LOGISTIC SUPPORT: Harry Carter, Rick Golightly

## EAST SAND ISLAND

*Columbia River estuary, Oregon*

All Caspian Terns nesting in the Columbia River estuary moved to a historic nesting site on East Sand Island (ESI) this summer in response to habitat creation and social attraction (decoys and sound recordings). The program to encourage colonization of ESI resulted from research that documented extremely high predation rates on juvenile salmon (young fish migrating to the ocean) by about 8,000 pairs of Caspian Terns at Rice Island, an artificial island 13 miles further upriver. To reduce predation on salmon, bulldozers cleared brush on ESI where researchers placed 380 life-size Caspian Tern decoys and sound equipment. In just the third field season, all of the terns left Rice Island and nested at ESI where consumption of salmon was greatly reduced.

To create an additional nesting colony, researchers also used social attraction equipment to encourage Caspian Terns to nest on an experimental barge in Commencement Bay, Washington. In a dramatic response to the technique, 388 pairs initiated nests on the barge by the end of May. ❖

## MIDWAY ATOLL NWR, HAWAII

*1,150 miles northwest of Honolulu*

At Midway Atoll, the 400,000 nesting pairs of Laysan and Black-footed albatrosses have attracted a few of the much larger (7.5 ft. wingspan) and endangered Short-tailed Albatrosses. Hundreds of thousands were slaughtered for feathers in the late 1800s. Today, only about 1,000 survive at just two remote islands (Torishima and Minami-kojima) south of Japan.

During the winter of 2000, decoys in life-like postures were positioned near sound playback equipment in ideal habitat on Eastern Island. Plans are now taking shape to increase the number of decoys by repainting the Laysan Albatross models used at Kaohikaipu Island (see *Egg Rock Update* 1994). ❖



*Short-tailed Albatross decoys were placed among nesting Laysan and Black-footed albatrosses on Midway Atoll NWR, Hawaii, during the winter of 2000. Photo by Stephen Kress.*

## PERROQUET ISLAND

*Mingan Islands, Quebec, Canada*

An "immense" colony of Northern Gannets nested on Perroquet Island until 1859 when local fishermen killed the birds for cod fishing bait. This hunting, combined with construction of a lighthouse, led to the end of this once-thriving colony. To help bring the gannets back to the island, National Audubon Society partnered with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation and the Mingan Islands Cetacean Study. The project began in 1997 when 47 life-size models and a sound system playing gannet calls were placed on the island (see *Egg Rock Update* 1997). Now in its fifth season, intern Justine Desmeules spent her summer observing the decoys and conducting outreach about seabirds to the local community. She reports fewer gannets in the vicinity of Perroquet Island this summer, but Justine discovered one bird that visited the decoys for several days in August. ❖

### **The 2001 Gannet Watch Team**

Justine Desmeules, Louise Labarre, Takuma Ward

# TERN HIGHLIGHTS

## JENNY ISLAND TERN COLONY BREAKS UP AFTER NINE YEARS

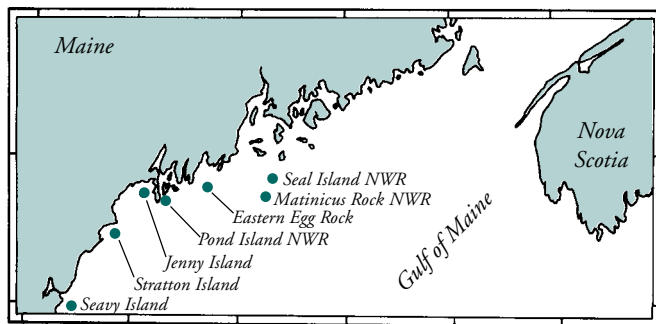
Approximately 1,000 pairs of Common Terns abandoned Jenny Island in Casco Bay this summer in response to continued predation from mink. In recent years, Jenny Island was the only nesting place in Casco Bay for these state-threatened birds. The abundant herding in the New Meadows River and protection on this state-owned sanctuary offered hope that the beleaguered Common Terns of Casco Bay would have a secure future at Jenny Island.

The trouble for the Jenny Island terns began in the summer of 2000, when mink killed at least 45 adult Common Terns as well as many chicks. In summer 2001, most of the terns abandoned by early June and we assumed that a single mink was the cause of the problem. Island Supervisor Jason Yakich successfully trapped one mink and was amazed to discover a second on the island just five days after removing the first. The second mink was shot and about 25 pairs of terns made a final attempt at nesting. Then, a third mink appeared three weeks later and killed at least 20 chicks in two nights before departing the island.

These mink likely swam at least a mile from nearby Cundy's Harbor or from neighboring islands. It appears that mink populations are at a cyclic high, as there were numerous reports of mink elsewhere on the Maine coast this summer.

### Gulf of Maine Tern Sanctuaries Provide Refuge

The wisdom of creating a system of tern refuges in the Gulf of Maine was evident this summer. Following the first mink predation, most of the Jenny Island terns quickly joined other tern colonies from Eastern Egg Rock to Seavy Island, N.H. Without these other sanctuaries, it is obvious that the thousand displaced pairs would have attempted nesting in less secure places without protection from our island stewards.



### Seavy Island

Located 55 miles south of Jenny Island and protected by the New Hampshire Audubon Society, Seavy Island, Isle of Shoals provided an ideal sanctuary for displaced terns. At least 460 pairs of Common Terns were nesting at Seavy in mid June and the

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*When predators disrupt tern colonies, breeding age birds can quickly decide to move elsewhere. By providing safe, alternate nesting refuges for terns, the Seabird Restoration Project ensured tern survival in the Gulf of Maine. Photo by Ed Carlson*

number increased to 809 pairs by mid July. These pairs fledged an average of 1.68 chicks/pair.

### Stratton Island

Most Jenny Island terns moved 28 miles south to Stratton Island, an Audubon-owned sanctuary in Saco Bay. Stratton's tern population increased 65% in 2001. Common Terns increased from 1,109 pairs in 2000 to 1,881 pairs this summer—distinguishing the island as the largest Common Tern colony in Maine. Common Terns enjoyed good success this summer, fledging 1.1 chicks/pair. Likewise, endangered Roseate Terns increased from 104

pairs in 2000 to 127 pairs this summer, continuing a six-year trend.

### Pond Island NWR

When supervisors Jaap and Heather Eijzenga set up their field camp in May, they were thrilled by the dramatic increase in tern numbers. They counted 135 pairs of Common Terns nesting this season—many were likely displaced from Jenny Island. Unfortunately, predators took their toll on this promising colony. Before the summer was over, Heather and Jaap documented predation by two Great Horned Owls, a raccoon and a mink! ❖

## OTHER TERN NEWS

### Eastern Egg Rock

The Common Tern colony at Eastern Egg Rock increased by 71 pairs this summer to 1,514 pairs; however, the reproductive rate was poor. Laughing Gull numbers increased for the 19th consecutive summer since 1983. Laughing Gull nesting pairs numbered 1,252 pairs in 2001—a 30 % increase since 2000 and a 339% increase since 1995! Julie Kleinhans and her team of Egg Rock stewards made numerous observations of Laughing Gull predation on Common and Roseate Terns this summer. For the first time in 14 years, the Roseate Tern population declined from 165 pairs in 2000 to 145 pairs in 2001 (53% of the state population). Common Terns produced just 0.4 chicks/pair. Roseate Terns enjoyed somewhat better success (0.52 chicks/pair) because they nest in denser cover.

### Matinicus Rock NWR

Arctic Terns enjoyed a successful nesting season at Matinicus Rock this summer. The colony was stable with 1,014 pairs, and these fledged an average of 0.8 chicks/pair. Approximately 810 chicks fledged from the island.

### Seal Island NWR

Common and Arctic Tern populations remained stable this summer at 1,197 and 860 pairs respectively. Food was ample and the weather cooperated to produce 817 fledgling Arctic Terns and 1,200 fledgling Common Terns. ❖



## CELEBRATING MATINICUS ROCK

### Celebrating 101 Years of Bird Protection 1900–2001

**M**atinicus Rock NWR is the most remote islet of outer Penobscot Bay. Carl W. Buchheister, Audubon President and champion of the island's importance to bird conservation, simply called it "The Rock." Located 22 miles offshore from Rockland, the island is legendary as the setting for 17-year-old Abby Burgess' heroic action that kept the lighthouse flame burning for a month when the gale of 1856 delayed her father from returning.

To those who care about wild birds, The Rock is important for both its 100-year history of bird protection and its present status as Maine's most important nesting island for Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills and Arctic Terns. Matinicus Rock is also notable because its seabirds were protected by the first wildlife warden in the United States. From this outermost rock, the bird protection movement spread across North America. ❖



PROJECT PUFFIN ARCHIVES



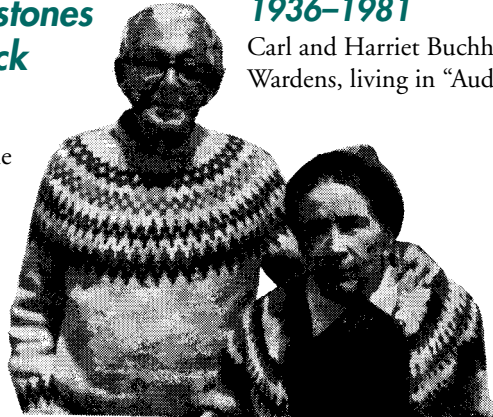
STEPHEN W. KRESS

*The twin tower light station was built in 1846 from granite quarried on the island. This replaced the original twin wooden towers connected by a rubblestone building in 1827. In 1857, the towers were rebuilt and moved further apart using granite quarried from St. George.*

### Bird Protection Milestones at Matinicus Rock

#### 1900

April 6th, William Dutcher, soon to become Audubon's first president, hired William G. Grant, Head Light Keeper, as the first wildlife warden in North America under the auspices of the American Ornithologists' Union Bird Protection Committee. Grant unexpectedly died before the nesting season and was replaced by James E. Hall, First Assistant Keeper, who was described as "the finest shot in these parts." Only two pairs of puffins nested at The Rock.



#### 1936–1981

Carl and Harriet Buchheister serve as volunteer Audubon Wardens, living in "Audubon House."

*Carl and Harriet Buchheister kept the tradition of Audubon wardens alive for 50 years and witnessed the dramatic recovery of island seabirds.*

#### 1946

On July 31, Alan Cruickshank, Ornithologist from the Audubon Camp in Maine, visits The Rock and observes 70 puffins; many feeding their young—evidence that protection is slowly helping the colony increase.

#### 1905–1930

The National Association of Audubon Societies (which became National Audubon Society in 1940) continued seabird protection by hiring successive Light Keepers.

*Annual report submitted by the Matinicus Rock warden. Medrick is a local name for tern; sea pigeon is a Black Guillemot; sea parrots are puffins.*

WARDEN'S ANNUAL REPORT  
for  
National Association of Audubon Societies

NOTE—This report should be filled out as completely as possible after the close of the breeding season, and not be used until receipt of a double issue.

Name of Warden... *Erant D. Hill*  
P. O. Address... *Matinicus Point, St. George, Me.*

Date... *Aug. 12, 1925*  
Area protected (name of island, lake or pond, and location)... *Matinicus Point*

QUESTION 1. Name all species of birds you contacted, and give approximate number of old birds present.

<i>Medricks</i>	<i>18000</i>
<i>Sea Pigeons</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Sand Pigeons</i>	<i>176</i>
<i>Sea Parrots</i>	<i>14</i>



STEVEN WALKER

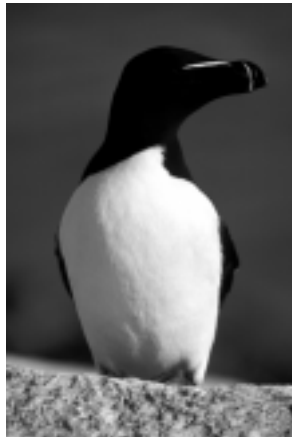
*With protection from hunting, puffin numbers are on the increase.*



## 1965

Carl Buchheister discovers the first Razorbill nesting at Matinicus Rock.

*Razorbills pioneered their colony on Matinicus Rock in 1965. Now the colony is growing rapidly and is the largest in Maine. Razorbills are the closest living relative to the now-extinct Great Auk that once frequented the Maine coast.*



*Becky Bishop, 1996 Island Supervisor, touches up the boathouse paint.*

PHOTOS BY  
STEPHEN W. KRESS (4)

## 1967

Matinicus Rock is designated a National Seabird Nesting Refuge, administered jointly by the Coast Guard and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## 1979

Project Puffin employs its first Matinicus Rock warden, John Guarnaccia. He lived in the light station with the Coast Guard crew.

## 1980

“White 14”—the first translocated puffin from Newfoundland—nests at Matinicus Rock.

## 1984

U.S. Coast Guard automates and transfers use of the Light Station to Audubon. Project Puffin team takes on maintenance of buildings.



*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rebuilds the boathouse, landing slip, walkway and historic light structure.*



*The tiny Audubon House that was occupied by the Buchheisters for nearly 50 summers still houses Audubon biologists. Susan Long, a Project Volunteer, lived in the house this summer.*

## 1999

Matinicus Rock becomes a unit of the Petit Manan NWR on October 20, 1999. Audubon continues its role of managing seabirds.

## 2001

Razorbill and puffin populations reach historic highs—164 pairs of Razorbills and nearly 300 pairs of puffins.

STEPHEN W. KRESS



*The Coast Guard disassembled most of the buildings from the original Light Keeper community. Today, structures include the Lighthouse, Boat House, Audubon House, and two light towers.*

## Want to see puffins in Maine?

### To Eastern Egg Rock from New Harbor

Hardy Boat Cruises  
PO Box 326  
New Harbor, ME 04552  
(207)677-2026 or (800) 2-PUFFINS  
e-mail: <Hardy@gwi.net>  
Internet: <<http://www.hardyboat.com>>

### To Eastern Egg Rock from Boothbay Harbor

R.N. Fish and Son, Inc.  
PO Box 660, 65 Atlantic Ave.  
Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538  
(207)633-3244 or (207)633-2626



# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

**P**uffin Pete” Salmansohn and “Seabird Sue” Schubel conducted a state-wide, in-class education program for school children in grades 3 through 8. Pete and Susan introduced 1,126 children to seabirds through hands-on activities adapted from the book *Giving Back to the Earth* by Salmansohn and Stephen Kress. Pete and Sue made 123 visits to 63 classes at 30 schools. In conjunction with Maine Audubon staff, they also conducted a teacher’s workshop in Falmouth for 30 teachers. During class visits, Pete and Sue challenged students to consider their place in coastal ecosystems and responsibilities as wildlife stewards through hands-on activities such as a “mock oil spill clean-up.” The Program receives support from Sea World, Walt Disney Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Maine teachers interested in participating should contact Sue at (207) 529-5828. ❖

## EXPLORING THE CORMORANT CONTROVERSY

**E**ducation Coordinator, Pete Salmansohn, created a new school outreach program titled “Exploring the Cormorant Controversy.” The program focuses on the 1998 slaughter of 1,000 Double-crested Cormorants on Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario, New York. Although the gunners were eventually arrested, the controversy surrounding cormorants on Lake Ontario and elsewhere in the United States continues. Fishing groups and aquaculture interests contend that cormorant populations are decimating fish populations. Scientists question this in most situations, where fishing pressure, water quality and introduced plants and animals also effects changes in fish populations.

The program uses many approaches—a visit from a tame cormorant (or taxidermy mount), skits to act out history, video footage, geography, drawing, math, and discussion. Students are encouraged to form their own opinions as their knowledge base and perspectives grow. ❖

## 2001 DOWN EAST ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

**S**tephen Kress received the 2001 Down East Environmental Award from Governor Angus King at a ceremony in the Governor’s Mansion in Augusta on June 27. The governor acknowledged Kress for “Daring to think you could lure the puffin back to Eastern Egg Rock, for developing common-sense methods to attract and nurture the birds, and for training and inspiring an entire generation of ornithologists.” ❖

## “PUFFIN CAM” ON OUR WEBSITE

**U**sing a system developed by SeeMore Wildlife Systems of Homer, Alaska, we streamed live images of puffins and terns onto the Internet. This year’s camera (known as ROBO II) was half the size of the basketball-sized ROBO I which we placed on Egg Rock last summer. With its smaller, less obtrusive size, the new camera gave the world a close view of puffin and tern activity. About 15,000 eager puffin watchers visited our website to view the on-line video. Although the camera was taken off Egg Rock by mid August (when the puffins departed), our website is still active. Take the “virtual tour” of Egg Rock, and listen to seabird sounds. The site is very popular with visitors of all ages, including school classes and holiday shoppers. ❖



*The Project website has tallied more than 50,000 visitors since it opened in February 2000. Visit us at <www.projectpuffin.org>*

Enroll in *Adopt-a-Puffin* online at [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org)

*For each gift of \$100 or more (tax deductible), you will receive a photograph, certificate of adoption, and biography of one Eastern Egg Rock puffin.*

Visit our web site, call us at (607) 257-7308, or write to Project Puffin, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, U.S.A.

## THE 2001 MAINE RESEARCH TEAM

*Absent from photo:*

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### Opening Season Staff

**First Row:** Jennifer Nagy; Amanda Lightcap (Seal Island NWR Asst. Supervisor); Peter Salmansohn (Education Coordinator); Christine Maranto (Matinicus Rock NWR Supervisor); Stephen Kress (Director); Michelle Briya; Risha Sparhawk; Matt Martinkovic; Hilary Cerny (Stratton Island Supervisor); Heather Eijzenga and Jaap Eijzenga (Pond Island NWR Co-Supervisors); Rosalie Borzik (Assistant Director). **Second Row:** Jason Yakich (Jenny Island Supervisor); Andre Breton (Seal Island NWR Supervisor); Ellen Peterson; Lauryn Benedict; Pam McKeen; Ed Carlson; Scott Hall (Research Coordinator); Shawn Devlin. **Third Row:** Julie Kleinhans (Eastern Egg Rock Supervisor); Shelby Sturgis; William Mauck III; Debbie Wood (Gifts Manager), and Steven Walker

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