

Friends of *Maine Seabird Islands*

SUPPORTING MAINE COASTAL ISLANDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN ITS EFFORTS TO CONSERVE, PROTECT & ENHANCE THE RICH DIVERSITY OF COASTAL HABITATS, SEABIRDS, AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Visitor Center Slated to Open in Spring 2012!

As reported in our last newsletter, the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge has relocated their headquarters to the former MBNA daycare center at 9 Water St in Rockland, Maine. FOMSI partnered with the Refuge in 2010 to purchase the property and is now helping to turn it into an environmental education center for people to learn about Maine's unique coastal island refuges and the wildlife that rely on them. The building is now being renovated and we are scheduled to occupy the new space in early 2012. Current plans include the opening of a visitor center and nature store, which we hope will

be open early next summer. The building, which includes the historic Snow house, will also house Refuge staff and provide office space for interns and educators. While FOMSI and the Refuge have some preliminary plans for the interior, they are still in the formative stage, and we welcome your input for the store, future exhibits, and environmental programs. One idea is to have computer stations where individuals can search out birding tours, puffin viewing sites, Refuge information, and other local information. FOMSI hopes our efforts will help take the island experience to our

visitors, and into the daily lives of our Refuge biologists, interns and the nesting seabirds. It is our hope that visitors to the Visitor Center will gain a strong sense of these important refuges and the wildlife that they host. Also in our plans are a meeting room and an art gallery on the second floor. Next year FOMSI will be in search of artists depicting refuge-related themes. Do you know any who may wish to exhibit there? Please have them contact us at: info@maineseabirds.org
By donating today you can help to ensure that our exhibits are created for future generations.

We would like to give special thanks to our chairwoman of 6 years, Jane Hopwood

Chairwoman Steps Down

In 2005, after being approached by the FOMSI Board several times, Jane Hopwood joined USFWS staff on a trip out to Mantinicus Rock. There she met the summer interns, saw their work, and the birds harbored by these islands. Luckily for FOMSI Jane was hooked. After just two months asked to be Chair and been auspicious. Jane's fundraising, and outreach FOMSI now has the Homestead and the shell center in downtown Rockland. Jane's work with the Wilderness Society to get the 13 Maine Coastal Islands designated as Federal Wilderness is just now coming to fruition - at this writing, the legislation was introduced to the House. She also notes that the FOMSI-created signage, warning of sensitive nesting areas, was adopted by Canadian government.

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on the Board, she was her 6-year tenure has warm personality, efforts are her legacy. Mr. Roland Richards of a brand new visitor center to get the 13 Maine Coastal Islands designated as Federal Wilderness is just now coming to fruition - at this writing, the legislation was introduced to the House. She also notes that the FOMSI-created signage, warning of sensitive nesting areas, was adopted by Canadian government.



In the past year Jane has been driving 4 hours each way to attend FOMSI meetings (never missing one) and while she will remain involved on the Board - now is the time for her to enjoy her grandchildren (two plus a grandnephew born within 5 weeks over the summer!). Taking time for family is also part of her vision for FOMSI's future work. “The Visitor Center is the apex for the coastal refuge system. We want to make it a destination for families to educate young and old about these sensitive island ecosystems.” Because of Jane Hopwood's hard work, FOMSI is now ready to make the Maine Coastal Islands Visitor Center a reality.

How can you help? JOIN FOMSI –

Friends of Maine Seabird Islands raises money for special projects and also acts in an advocacy capacity by contacting congressional legislators and staff to underscore the importance of the research the Refuge staff conducts. FOMSI membership gives you an insider's perspective on issues impacting island wildlife and management. Times are hard – You can help!



Two New Islands Added...totaling 56 islands in all

Two seabird nesting islands have just been added to the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge, thanks to a partnership between Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), a statewide land conservation organization, and the USFWS. Sally Island in Gouldsboro is 5 acres and home to eider ducks, black guillemots and other species. 3.5-acre North Twinnie Island (pictured above)

in Bar Harbor offers feeding and nesting habitat to various duck species and supports a bald eagle nest. MCHT secured both islands in recent years with the intent of transferring them to the Refuge for permanent conservation when funds became available. This transfer brings the total number of islands in the Refuge to 56.

Programs Coordinator Hired



As the Board charges on in their work with the Maine Coastal Islands Visitor Center it became evident that a hired assistant would be necessary to help see the vision through. The Board recently voted to hire on Stephanie Martin as Programs Coordinator of FOMSI. Stephanie is a biologist with a M.S. degree from Humboldt State University. The Programs Coordinator's charge is to fundraise for and get the Visitor Center up and running. Stephanie is currently working out of the Refuge's temporary headquarters

in Rockport (near Fresh off the Farm), so stop in to introduce yourself or renew your membership. Once the renovation of the Rockland Visitor Center is complete she will work there.

Living With Seabirds

In early 2012, USFWS in partnership with FOMSI will release a new 35-page guide



“Seabirds of the Maine Coast – An Island Owner’s Guide”. This illustrated reference guide will be sent free of charge to coastal island landowners through the efforts of FOMSI. The guide includes bird, nest and egg identification, action plans to protect these birds, regulations governing wildlife and endangered species, as well as maps and resources to help guide island landowners. This booklet is a fine resource for anyone interested in island or coastal ecosystems, and FOMSI will have copies available for sale at the Maine Coastal Islands Visitor’s Center.

Grants...Received and Given...

FOMSI is proud to announce that we received two important grants to date this year, \$7,500 from the Quimby Family Foundation and \$4,300 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Quimby Foundation grant is for the fabrication and installation of a 28 foot long mural of the coast of Maine which will be mounted in the main room of the new visitor center in Rockland. The map will depict all seabird nesting islands and Refuge units, from the New Hampshire border to the New Brunswick border. This is the first major grant we have received for exhibits in the visitor center. We know that visitors to this area are hungry for information about the natural history of the Maine coast, and this stunning map will get them oriented to the size and unique geological features that feature so prominently in the ecology of our coast. We also appreciate

the cooperation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Northeast Regional Office’s GIS lab, as they will be creating the map file used to produce the mural. This is the third year in a row that we have received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), based in Washington, DC. With budget cuts for the National Wildlife Refuge System looming on the horizon, Federal funding for exhibits in our visitor center is questionable. The purpose of this grant is to help us develop marketing materials so that we can approach foundations and individuals to assist with funding for exhibit design and construction. Procuring funds for the exhibits is our top priority for the upcoming year, and we truly appreciate NFWF’s continuing support. We also completed a NFWF grant awarded in 2010 for seabird identification cards and decals that will be given to tour boat

operators, the Maine ferry system, the Maine windjammer fleet and others to help visitors to identify the seabirds they see offshore. FOMSI also awarded three grants this year. When possible, using funds from our membership drives and other fundraising activities such as our boat trips, we award grants to individuals or organizations conducting seabird research. This year we awarded a total of three grants: \$5,124 to the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge to purchase computers for the island interns; \$2,550 to the Puffin Project to replace staff computers; and \$2,142 to purchase new bed frames and mattresses for the Matinicus Rock field station. We take tremendous pleasure in awarding these grants because they support the biologists in their important seabird research endeavors. This includes being able to get a good night’s sleep!

A BIG THANKS TO OUR INTERNS!!



Eight student research interns reported to the USFWS Refuge Office in Milbridge this spring for their orientation and training to spend 3 months on a nesting seabird island. From left to right, Nathan Elliot (from MN), Lisa Harn (MD), Jesse Warner (NY), Jennifer Wiacek (ME), Charlie Walsh (a third year veteran from Thomaston, ME), Christa DeRaspe (HI), Andrew Allyn (MA), and Andre LaCoste (MA). USFWS Research Interns served on 4 different islands working on the nesting seabird colonies and taking daily observations. The interns passed their days counting the birds and monitoring their feeding behavior and diet; they also protected them from predators and human disturbance. FOMSI is inspired by these intern's hard work and love of the islands!

Budget Realities at the Refuge

As the Refuge ends one fiscal year and heads into the next, nothing is certain. However, all indications are that the USFWS, along with all other government agencies, will see reductions in their budgets over the next several years. This likely means that the outreach/interpreter position the Refuge so badly needs to help design exhibits and staff the new visitor center will not be hired in the near future. Threatened cuts in the land acquisition funds would also reduce the number of islands that can be added to the Refuge. Lastly, cuts will likely reduce the Refuge's ability to manage the islands and protect seabirds. According to Refuge Manager Beth Goettel, a number of projections have been made to look at the impacts of anticipated cuts. Cuts that sound slight have serious repercussions. The salaries are a fixed cost, so the effects of the cuts will come out of the "management capability." This is what pays for basics, like utilities and vehicle fuel, as well as all management and research projects. If the Refuge sustains a 5% budget reduction in 2012, the Refuge could still afford the seabird researchers and a seasonal maintenance position, but would not be able to control invasive plants on islands. A 10% cut in 2012 would result in the Refuge only being able to hire researchers for half of the islands. Obviously, inflation or additional cuts in following years will exacerbate the problem, and eventually require staff reductions.

Follow next year's crop of island interns on their blog which can be accessed through our website at:
<http://www.maine seabirds.org>

2011 Seabird Season Update

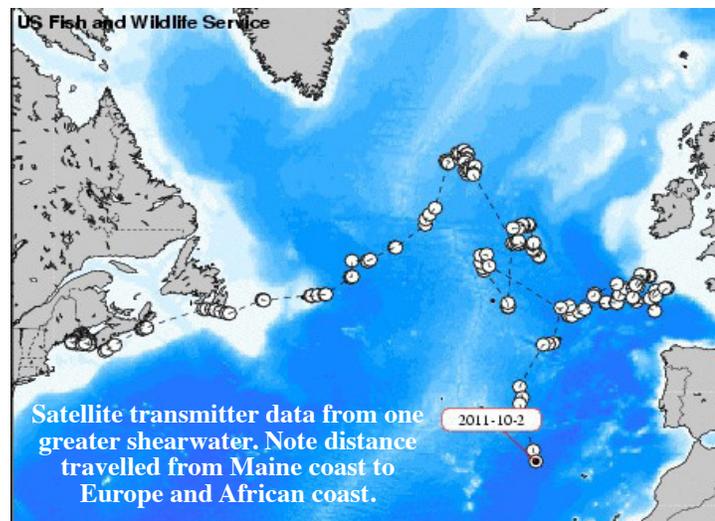
Although puffins and razorbills are difficult to census because they nest in burrows, their numbers are on the rise in the Gulf of Maine. Machias Seal Island researchers reported that they did a complete survey and believe they have about 6,000 pairs of puffins. Although the total number of nesting tern pairs remained about the same as in 2010, several trends noticed last year continued. The Federally-endangered Roseate terns continued to decline range-wide. Roseate terns reached a low this year of only 149 pairs in Maine, with 90 of those pairs on Eastern Egg Rock. Petit Manan Island again suffered from a lack of preferred food, herring, in the middle of the season, and many common and Arctic tern chicks died from starvation. Like last year, the more southwestern islands in Maine had better food and productivity, but the researchers are still unsure of why this is occurring. Laughing gulls, a major predator of the nesting seabirds, have declined on Petit Manan Island and Matinicus Rock, but have

continued to increase on Eastern Egg Rock. On another note, geolocators (tiny data loggers strapped to birds legs) were recovered from many of the terns and puffins which carried them over the winter. We are all looking forward to seeing the data on their migration tracks, and wintering habitat areas. Also, four greater shearwaters were captured and fitted with satellite transmitters so their movements in the Gulf of Maine and during migration may be followed at http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?project_id=570 or linked off our website. A songbird banding team worked on Metinic Island in the spring, and this fall there are banding teams on Petit Manan Point in Steuben and Metinic, with acoustic units to detect night-migrating songbirds



Geolocator on Arctic tern leg

and bats on those sites paired with inland acoustic units. Researchers are also doing visual surveys and vegetation sampling. This is part of a larger effort, the Northeast Regional Migration Monitoring Network; the National Park Service and the University of Maine are running efforts on Great Duck Island and Mt. Desert.





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5th Annual Seabird Cruise...success!

On July 10th FOMSI chartered the marine vessel 'Elizabeth Ann' out of her homeport of Port Clyde, Maine. Once again we offered a special tour of nesting seabirds on Eastern Egg Rock. All attendees were afforded numerous views of swimming and perching Atlantic puffins as well as the three species of terns nesting on the island (Arctic, common, and roseate). Guillemots were also numerous and gregarious with their bright red bills and feet. The trip was narrated by Steve Kress, Founder of the Puffin Project and Vice President of Bird Conservation with National Audubon. USFWS refuge biologists, Michael Langlois and Brian Benedict demonstrated capture and radio-tagging techniques used on many seabird species nesting in the bay. We all watched from the boat as interns on Eastern Egg Rock collected data amidst the flying and squawking birds. The beautiful day and calm seas made for spectacular viewing. FOMSI sold over 100 tickets and had attendees from all over North America. Beer and wine were served along with snacks throughout the entire trip. The money collected from this trip is part of a fundraising effort to support research and education of seabirds on Maine's Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. We would like to thank all FOMSI members who attended this year's cruise in support of the birds and critical habitat represented by Eastern Egg Rock's nesting colonies. Your support is critical as USFWS faces across-the-board funding cuts that may eliminate some of these programs. Please consider joining us in July of 2012 for our next seabird cruise!



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