



Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program
of the National Audubon Society

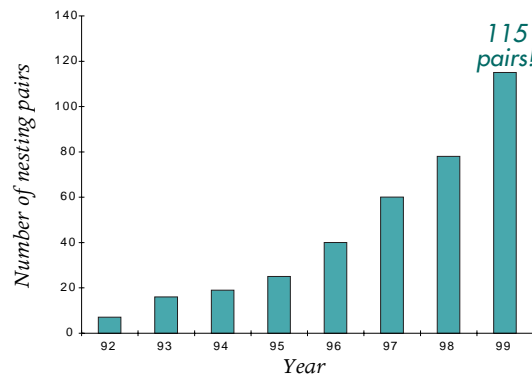
1999

PUFFIN NUMBERS "EXPLODE"

The restored puffin colonies at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Eastern Egg Rock have grown in recent years, but the growth in 1999 was nothing short of explosive!

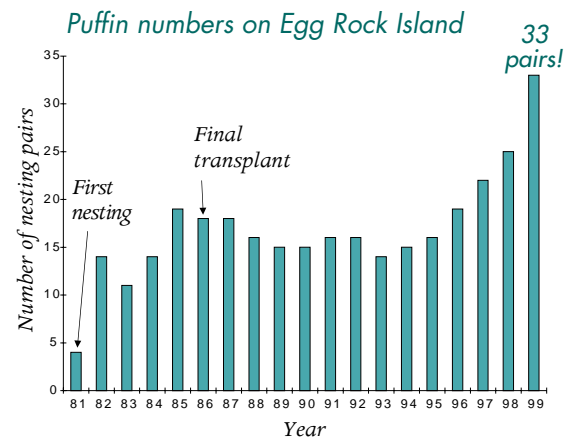
The Seal Island puffin numbers have increased by about 30% each year since the first seven pairs recolonized the island in 1992 and continued to expand in following years, with 78 pairs nesting in 1998. We expected more in 1999, but were amazed by the 47% increase to 115 nesting pairs.

Puffin numbers on Seal Island



Growth of the Egg Rock colony has shown a very different pattern. Four pairs nested in 1981, followed by an increase and a subsequent plateau at 14–16 pairs. The colony began slowly growing again from 1996 through 1998 reaching 25 pairs. The Egg Rock "explosion" this summer was smaller than at Seal Island, but impressive by recent comparisons. Puffin numbers increased by a surprising 32% this summer as eight new pairs joined the colony. The total number of nesting pairs now stands at 33—the highest count to date.

In the late 1800s, the original Eastern Egg Rock and Seal Island puffin colonies were decimated by excessive hunting for meat and feathers. This resulted in their extirpation from both islands by 1885. To spark recolonization, a total of 1,904 puffin nestlings



were brought from Newfoundland to Maine in the 1970s and early 1980s by National Audubon Society and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Although Seal Island was a National Wildlife Refuge and Eastern Egg Rock was designated as a sanctuary by the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, alone these conservation designations did little to encourage recolonization. Translocation of nestling puffins and removal of breeding Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls were the principal techniques employed. Later, decoys and mirrors encouraged the first prospectors to stay at the islands, eventually resulting in new colonies. Continued presence by Audubon warden/biologists is still necessary to prevent gulls from reclaiming the

Stephen W. Kress



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islands and to prevent disturbance from the visiting public.

Although most of the new puffin breeders at both islands are unbanded (and thus we have no clues to their origins), some wear U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and plastic engraved bands that reveal the source for the expanding colony. One of the many surprises discovered this summer was puffin A-1 breeding at Egg Rock. A-1 is the first native chick to fledge from the newly restored colony at Seal Island! It visited Egg Rock for several summers and eventually, at seven years of age, nested this summer.

Bands have also revealed the source for many of the Seal Island puffins. Ten of the 80 Seal Island breeders that are banded

were originally banded as chicks at nearby Matinicus Rock. Additionally, puffins originally banded at Machias Seal Island (five) and Petit Manan Island (one) were among the banded puffins nesting at Seal Island this summer. Seal Island's proximity to the expanding colonies on Matinicus Rock and Machias Seal Island are likely the primary reason that restoration is proceeding faster there than at Egg Rock.

The dramatic growth recorded this summer at both restored colonies is not an isolated event. Increasing populations are a reflection of the successful stewardship of all puffin colonies in the Gulf of Maine. ❖



Puffin devotees who contribute \$100 or more (it's tax deductible) to the Seabird Restoration Program will receive a certificate of adoption for one Eastern Egg Rock puffin, along with a photograph and a biography of the bird. Send e-mail to <puffin@audubon.org>, call us at (607) 257-7308, or write to Project Puffin, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.

TECHNIQUES ASSIST CASPIAN TERNS AND SALMON IN THE WEST



The colony-creation techniques for restoring Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns off the Maine Coast are benefiting Caspian Terns and salmon in Oregon. Social attraction—the use of decoys and recorded sound—was used to restore Caspian Terns to historic nesting habitat on East Sand Island in the mouth of the Columbia River on the Oregon-Washington border. The Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Marines used bulldozers to remove vegetation and create ideal tern-nesting habitat. Biologists from Oregon State University and Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission then placed decoys and sound recordings in the new habitat and controlled predatory gulls. This provided ideal conditions for the terns to establish a highly productive colony of 1,400 pairs. Apparently, most of these birds were enticed from Rice Island, a dredge-spoil site further up the river, where 75% of the terns' diet was young salmon (seven to 15 million were consumed annually). At the new colony, only 44% of the terns' diet included salmon. ❖

Honor Stones

Place a stone at Eastern Egg Rock in honor of a favorite person. Engraved stones make unique gifts to honor special occasions or serve as memorials—and they also add to puffin habitat! A local company will supply the stone and engrave it. Audubon staff will transport and photograph it among the puffins. Your tax-deductible gift of \$1,500 to Audubon's Project Puffin will also help us protect Maine puffin sanctuaries. For more information, send e-mail to <puffin@audubon.org>, call us at (607) 257-7308, or write to Project Puffin, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.



TERN HIGHLIGHTS AT AUDUBON SANCTUARIES

Audubon managed sanctuaries showed continued growth in nesting tern populations—a trend that began in 1984 when Audubon and other conservation groups began a regional approach to tern management. The annual tern census on the six Maine islands managed by Audubon tallied 4,502 pairs of Common Terns, 2,160 pairs of Arctic Terns and 239 pairs of Roseate Terns. These represent respectively 61%, 44% and 81% of these Maine coast populations. Growth of the endangered Roseate Tern population is especially heartening with an increase of 12% this summer at Maine colonies.

COMMON TERNS RECOLONIZE POND ISLAND NWR

For the first time in over 60 years, Common Terns successfully nested on Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge, a former breeding site at the mouth of the Kennebec River. Terns were hunted for the feather trade at the turn of the century at the Kennebec colony and the remainder was displaced by gulls by 1937. This summer, a total of 22 nests containing 46 eggs were found on the island. The discovery of five chicks on June 25th marked an historic moment in the four-year effort to re-establish a tern colony on this ten-acre island. Twenty-four of the 46 eggs hatched and 14 chicks fledged. Nests found during the three preceding years failed due to severe weather and the effects of predatory Great Horned Owls.



The Pond Island lighthouse
Photo by Sean Donaghy

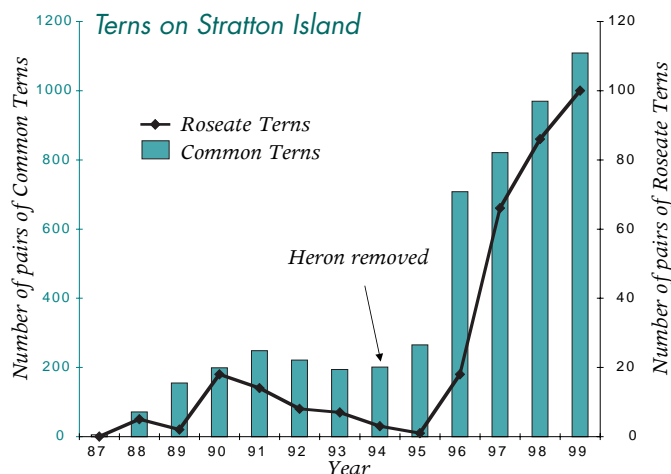


Since 1984, tern population numbers on Audubon-managed islands have been soaring. This year, Audubon staff counted over 6,500 pairs of Common, Arctic, and Roseate terns on Maine Coast islands.

Photo by Stephen W. Kress

STRATTON ISLAND

Stratton Island, the only tern colony in southern Maine, continues to grow at a rapid pace. This summer's annual census ranks Stratton Island as the fourth largest tern colony in Maine with 1,221 pairs of Common, Roseate and Arctic Terns. With 100 nesting pairs of the federally endangered Roseate Terns, the Stratton Island colony numbers second only to Eastern Egg Rock. Approximately 1,630 Common and 168 Roseate Tern young fledged on Stratton this season—the highest tern productivity recorded in the Gulf of Maine for the 1999 season.



Roseate and Common Terns have increased rapidly at Stratton Island since 1994 when a predatory Black-crowned Night-heron was removed.

JENNY ISLAND

This two and one-half acre island supported 1,129 pairs of Common Terns, the second largest colony in the Gulf of Maine. Approximately 1,525 chicks fledged this season—a continuation of Jenny Island's high rate of productivity. The colony has grown each year since restoration began in 1991. Ten pairs of the endangered Roseate Tern also nested at Jenny Island.

EASTERN EGG ROCK

With 1,205 pairs of Common Terns and 149 pairs of Roseate Terns, Egg Rock has the distinction of being Maine's largest colony for both species. Egg Rock is home to more than half of the Roseate Terns found in the Gulf of Maine. With 91 pairs of Arctic Terns also nesting on the island, Egg Rock ranks as the second largest mixed-species tern colony in Maine. This summer, 1,289 Common and 185 Roseate Tern young fledged from Egg Rock.

MATINICUS ROCK

Matinicus Rock was home to 968 pairs of Arctic Terns as well as 102 pairs of Common Terns this summer. Of the approximately 842 Arctic Tern chicks that fledged this summer, many were taken by predatory Laughing Gulls or died since their larger (older) sibling was fed most of the food. We will continue to monitor the effects the increasing number of nesting Laughing Gulls is having on the productivity at Maine's second largest Arctic Tern colony.

SEAL ISLAND NWR

Seal Island is the largest mixed-species tern colony in Maine, providing nesting habitat for 2,038 pairs this season. Of that total, the 1,082 pairs of Arctic Terns form the largest nesting population on a Maine Island. The colony had a very successful nesting season producing 917 and 974 fledglings for Common and Arctic Terns respectively.



RAZORBILLS NEST SUCCESSFULLY AT SEAL ISLAND NWR

Following the discovery of an abandoned Razorbill egg last season (see *Egg Rock Update* 1998), Island Supervisor Andre Breton was elated this summer to discover on July 9th an active nest with a nearly full-grown chick. We are hopeful that this first Razorbill chick will herald the beginning of a new and thriving colony. Previously, there were only three Razorbill-nesting islands on the Maine coast. ❖

FIRST NESTING OF BLACK GUILLEMOTS AT STRATTON ISLAND

Stratton Island, the Phineas W. Sprague Wildlife Sanctuary, is the most species-rich waterbird colony in Maine. Now, another species can be added. On July 20th, researchers discovered a Black Guillemot delivering food into a rock crevice. A thorough search eventually yielded two guillemot chicks near fledging age! ❖



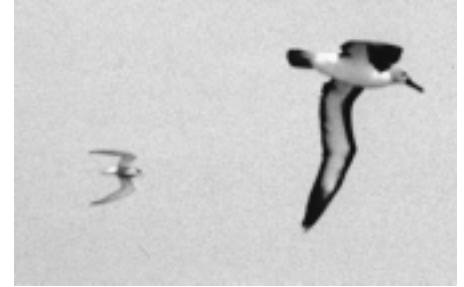
Island Supervisor Julie Dodge and Dale Tyson (center) proudly display Stratton Island's first Black Guillemot chicks. The research team (left to right) is Steve Yokim, Dale Tyson, Julie Dodge, Lauryn Benedict and Jonathan Rosenthal (event photographer).

A "WHALE OF A LEATHERBACK" VISITS EASTERN EGG ROCK

On July 18th, Island Supervisor Terry Goodhue was scanning the Egg Rock shoreline for his morning bird count when he noticed what he thought was a whale entangled in lobster gear. As Terry, Martin Junco and Steve Walker approached the thrashing creature in their inflatable dinghy, they realized the animal was actually a Leatherback sea turtle. While working to disentangle the turtle, Terry and his team were taken on an 'Egg Rock Sleigh Ride' as the six-foot-long leatherback pulled the boat. Eventually, the turtle was released and swam off towards open water. ❖

YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS VISITS MATINICUS ROCK

On July 6th, the Matinicus Rock research team watched, photographed and video-taped a Yellow-nosed Albatross for more than two hours while it soared around the island. Yellow-nosed Albatross are common residents of the South Atlantic, especially the coasts of Argentina and the Indian Ocean, but are extremely rare off the Maine coast. This was only the fifth known sighting for this species in the Gulf of Maine. ❖



A Yellow-nosed Albatross soared around Matinicus Rock in July. Photo by Lauryn Benedict.

GANNETS OCCUPY DECOY SITE AT PERROQUET ISLAND

The project to restore a Northern Gannet colony to Perroquet Island, Quebec in the Mingan Archipelago on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, continued this summer for a third year (see *Egg Rock Updates* 1997 and 1998). Gannets nested at the island until 1859, but excessive hunting of the birds for use as cod bait and construction of a lighthouse on Perroquet led to the gannets' abandonment of the island. Gannets are usually reluctant to start new colonies, as evidenced by the fact that in North America, they nest in just six colonies.

This June, 43 life-size decoys were placed on seaweed nests. These were positioned on weed-barrier fabric and the area around each nest was painted with white streaks to resemble guano. A stereo recording of gannet calls was broadcast 24-hours daily to further the impression of an active colony.

For the third consecutive season, an adult gannet resided among the decoys. But for the first time, a second gannet was also present for most of the summer.

Both birds were observed pulling at grass and tucking it beneath their bodies—a promising nest-building behavior. As many as 1,900 gannets were sighted in one day, flying, feeding and sitting in the water around the island. The restoration project is sponsored by the National Audubon Society, Quebec-Labrador Foundation and the Mingan Islands Cetacean Study and is supported by grants from the Baird Foundation and the Baillie Fund of Long Point Bird Observatory. ❖

We gratefully acknowledge the 1999 Gannet Watch Team

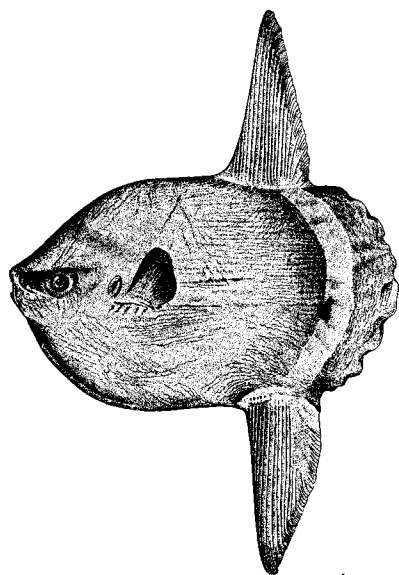
Ellen Avard, Christophe Buidin, & Yan Rochepault



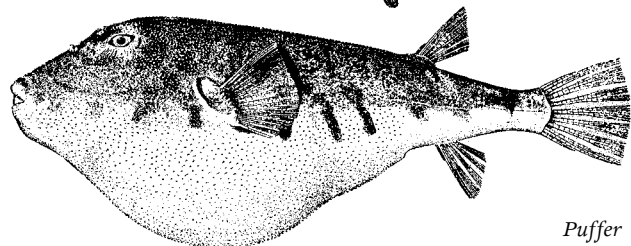
UNUSUAL SPECIES OF FISH RECORDED

For the first time in many years, Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*), huge filter-feeding fish, were seen in the Gulf of Maine. These passive animals are infrequent visitors to Maine waters, usually preferring the warmer waters off the central Atlantic Coast. Other fish surprises were discovered during seabird diet studies. Puffer (*Sphaeroides maculatus*), a small, scaleless fish (which can inflate itself until almost round) is well known in Chesapeake Bay where it breeds. It is occasionally seen along the southern coast of Massachusetts and only rarely north of Cape Cod. Sand Launce (*Ammodytes americanus*), another southern fish, was also seen in tern and puffin diets throughout the summer at Egg Rock, Matinicus Rock and Seal Island.

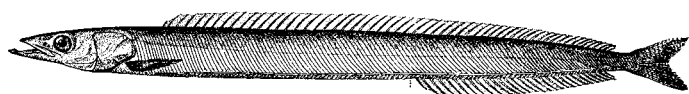
These unusual sightings may have been related to water temperature. The average surface water temperature recorded off Eastern Egg Rock Island in June 1999 was 57.54°F—which is 3.75° higher than the previous year. July’s average of 60.94°F was 1.5° warmer than in 1998. The State of Maine Department of Marine Resources also noted that surface temperatures were noticeably warmer than in previous years. Mean temperatures for May and July were the highest recorded in more than 40 years, while June 1999 was the warmest since data collection began in 1905.



Ocean Sunfish



Puffer



Sand Launce

Illustrations from *Fishes of the Gulf of Maine*, 1953

MURRE COUNT AT DEVIL’S SLIDE ROCK RISES FROM 15 TO 70 PAIRS!

The project to restore Common Murres to Devil’s Slide Rock (see *Egg Rock Update* 1996–1998) on the central California coast completed its 4th field season with a dramatic jump to 70 nesting pairs. The colony was exceptionally productive. Most pairs fledged their single chick—a remarkable productivity rate of .84 chicks/pair. The long-established murre colony on Devil’s Slide Rock disappeared in 1986 following the Apex Houston oil spill. Recolonization began in 1996 with the use of murre decoys, mirrors and sound equipment. This project is funded by the Apex Houston Trustee Council.

We gratefully acknowledge the 1999 California Project Murre team

Leader

Mike Parker

Crew

Jennifer Boyce
Emilie Craig
Holly Gellerman
David Nothhelfer
Richard Young
Nora Rojek
Christine Hamilton
Victoria Slowik

Logistic Support

Harry Carter
Rick Golightly

PARTNERS FOR HAWAIIAN SEABIRDS

More than 100 volunteers have helped Audubon observe Laysan Albatross at Kaohikaipu Island over the past six years as part of an effort to establish a safe nesting place for the birds on the leeward side of Oahu. The program continued during the winter of 1998–99, with observers tallying 344 hours of observation to document albatross use of the decoy area. During this time, albatross continued to irregularly visit the island and likely slept overnight among the decoys on several occasions. In addition to monitoring albatross, volunteers began working with seabird biologists and managers on a variety of projects to further seabird conservation. New programs include in-school presentations to elementary schools and outreach concerning albatross radio tracking.

Our sincerest appreciation goes to the 1999 Albatross Watchers & Set-up Crew

Volunteer Coordinator

Lisa Rotterman

Research Assistant

Lynnea Overholt

Volunteers

Arlene Buchholz
Peter Donaldson
Vicky Dworkin
Kiley Espresión
Kama Tam
John Wendell
Thia West
Brandi Yarnell

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

PUFFIN-WATCHING TOURS

Clear, warm weather encouraged record-high numbers of passengers aboard our narrated puffin cruises. Audubon naturalists, Pete Salmansohn, Paul Hai and Jim Booker conducted tours from early June through mid-August, introducing the seabirds of Eastern Egg Rock to 4,671 passengers.

"PUFFIN PETE" BRINGS SEABIRDS TO MAINE CLASSROOMS

When puffins migrate out to sea at the end of August, Pete Salmansohn takes the Seabird Education Outreach Program indoors. During the 1998-99 school year, Pete introduced 1,713 children in 76 classrooms in 32 Maine schools to the Project Puffin story. Using hands-on activities, Pete challenges these students to look at the complex issues of the environment and conservation in constructive and educational ways.

The in-school program is supported in large part by contributions from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Sea World, Down East Energy and the Davis Conservation Fund. Contact Pete for more information or to arrange a classroom program. Send e-mail to him at <puffpete@lincoln.midcoast.net> or telephone (207) 529-5828.

PROJECT PUFFIN ON TV

A Sea World film crew visited Seal Island NWR this summer to produce two new documentaries. Jack Hanna's *Animal Adventures* series will air an episode entitled "Project Puffin" on the weekend of February 12, 2000. Check local listings for exact times. The second program, "Penguin Predicaments" airs on Shamu TV via satellite. It is designed for the *Cable In the Classroom* series and will be aired on February 18, 2000. Additional information for both shows is available on the Internet at <http://www.shamutv.com> and <http://www.jackhanna.com>.

PUFFINS ON THE INTERNET <http://puffin.bird.audubon.org>

Follow Project Puffin on the World Wide Web by visiting our new home page. The page will offer information on seabird biology and the latest news about our work. Photos and information will also be available to help students with school reports on seabird conservation. Visit us soon!

CSX SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Project Puffin participated in the CSX Scholars Program for the first time this year. This innovative program honors minority students with outstanding academic records and an interest in environmentally-focused careers. CSX (a Fortune 500 freight transportation company), Audubon, and the United Negro College Fund created this partnership in 1998. Dale Tyson, a native of Trinidad and a senior at Claflin College in Orangeburg, South Carolina, is the first CSX Scholar to join the Project Puffin team. Dale spent ten weeks working and learning at three of our Maine sanctuaries.



Dale Tyson, the first Project Puffin CSX scholar, holds an Egg Rock puffin ready to be banded
Photo by RuthAnne Hoffner.

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



OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION GOES TO THE 1999 MAINE RESEARCH TEAM

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project Puffin is supported by the Science and Sanctuaries Divisions of the National Audubon Society—special thanks to Frank Gill.

We thank the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for permission to work on Eastern Egg Rock and Jenny Island, the US Coast Guard for the privilege of working on Matinicus Rock, the USFWS for allowing us to conduct our studies on Seal Island and Pond Island Wildlife Refuges. We also thank Seth Benz for providing use of the Hog Island and mainland Audubon Ecology Camp facilities and Scott Saunders for his invaluable logistic support.

It is a special pleasure to acknowledge the generous assistance and gifts from the following people:

- A Silver Lining of Boothbay Harbor, Maine (Tony Heyl & Carolyn Shubert) for donating our 1999 Birdathon prizes
- Mrs. Emily Allen for the use of her Round Pond, Maine home
- Stan Atwood for providing firearm safety lessons to our staff and for loaning his equipment
- B & B Communications for providing Internet access to our Education Program
- Barbara's Bakery for donating cereal and snacks for our research staff
- Camp Kieve for use of their vehicles
- John Drury and Lucy McCarthy for supplying water and trash removal for the offshore research sites and for providing shelter for the staff en route during rough weather.
- Ralph, Terry and Scotty Dunning for providing space for the Jenny Island crew to park their cars and boat
- John Fitzpatrick and the entire staff of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for continued cooperation with Project Puffin
- Ann & Walter Gamble for providing potable water, parking, shower facilities and friendship to the Pond Island crew
- Hardy Boat Cruises, R.N. Fish & Son, Outward Bound, and Lucy LaCasse for their generous assistance with logistics

- Sharon Reilly and Dave Smith of the Hawaii Division of Forestry for their assistance with the Hawaii albatross project
- James Henry of Mad River Decoys in Waitsfield, Vermont for donating Least Tern decoys for use on Stratton Island
- Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lee for the gracious hospitality they provide the Stratton Island interns
- Pacific Remote National Wildlife Refuge staff for assistance at Kaohikaipu
- Prout's Neck Audubon Society and the Prout's Neck Women's Auxiliary for donating photo voltaic panels
- Elliot Robinson for assistance with our field computers and battery storage
- Godfrey Rockefeller and Herb Pratt for always pulling through when the Stratton Island staff call for assistance
- Sea Life Park staff on Oahu, HI for providing our volunteers with a place to view albatross
- Stan Skutek and the staff of Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge for assistance and enthusiastic support of our work at Seal Island and Pond Island NWRs
- Clark Smith and the staff of the Prout's Neck Yacht Club for their assistance with Stratton Island logistics
- Diane Tessaglia-Hymes and Ken Schlather for all their computer assistance
- Helen and Chris Tupper for providing storage, water, showers, logistics support and hospitality to our Jenny Island staff
- Thomas Urquhart and his family for monitoring visitor access to Stratton Island during the end-of-season tern meeting
- Steven Walker, Jacqueline Walker and Stephen Anderson for donating a new Avon boat for Eastern Egg Rock
- Steven Walker for photographing the Egg Rock puffins and providing the slides used in the Adopt-A-Puffin Program and for donating Leica binoculars to our program
- Robert and Karin Watson for providing potable water to the Jenny Island crew
- Rick Woodruff for giving permission for the Pond Island crew to use his dock

1998-1999 CONTRIBUTORS

SPECIAL GIFTS

In Memory of Michael Apgar

Jean Apgar through the Michael A. Apgar Memorial Fund

In Memory of Melville H. Ireland

Kate Ireland
The Ireland Foundation
Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Webster Jr.

In Memory of Lucile LaGanck

C. Helen Eovito

In Memory of Clara H. Lebovitz

The Clara H. Lebovitz Maine Coast Sanctuary Internship Fund

In Memory of Dorothy Little

Diane Little

In Memory of Floyd & Irene Wilkins

Denice L. Wilkins and John P. Wilson

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