



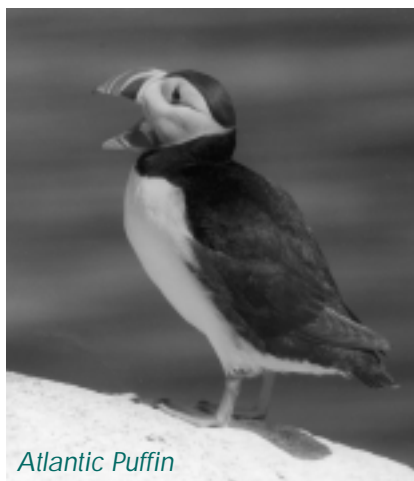
Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program
of the National Audubon Society

2000

HOW MANY SEABIRDS CAN EGG ROCK SUPPORT?

Seabird populations on Eastern Egg Rock, the world's first restored waterbird community, showed further remarkable growth this summer. By summer 2000, colonies of endangered Roseate Terns, state-threatened Common Terns and Laughing Gulls increased to the largest in Maine. The combination of using proactive techniques to restore Atlantic Puffins and Common Terns, while preventing nesting of predatory Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, has led to remarkable



Atlantic Puffin

Stephen Kress

growth among vulnerable species such as Roseate Terns, Laughing Gulls and Common Eiders. Following are a few of the summer 2000 highlights:

Puffins disappeared from Eastern Egg Rock in 1885 due to excessive hunting for food and feathers. Restoration began in 1973 when the first six of 954 puffin chicks were translocated to the island from Great Island, Newfoundland. From 1973 to 1986, puffin chicks were housed in sod burrows and hand-reared on a diet of thawed fish and vitamins. Four pairs recolonized the island in 1981. The colony increased to a stable population of about 16 pairs by 1995, but has more than doubled in the last five years. By summer 2000, Egg Rock puffins were at an all-time high of 35 pairs!

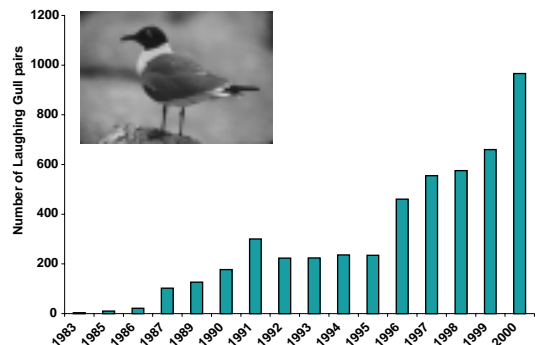
Tern decoys and sound recordings helped to lure Common and Arctic Terns back to Egg Rock after an absence of 44 years. Endangered Roseate Terns later joined the restored tern colony and for 14 consecutive years have increased their numbers at Egg Rock. This season, 165 pairs of roseates nested

among 1,443 pairs of Common Terns. These are the largest colonies of both species in Maine, representing respectively 58% and 33% of the state populations. The more abundant Common Terns offer the Roseates an advantage, as they help to drive off predatory gulls.

Laughing Gulls nest on just four islands in the Gulf of Maine (Eastern Egg Rock, Matinicus Rock, Petit Manan Island and Jenny Island) where they benefit by nesting com-

patibly among the more aggressive terns. Unlike Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls that often eat tern eggs and chicks, most Laughing Gulls feed on fly-

Laughing Gull populations on Eastern Egg Rock

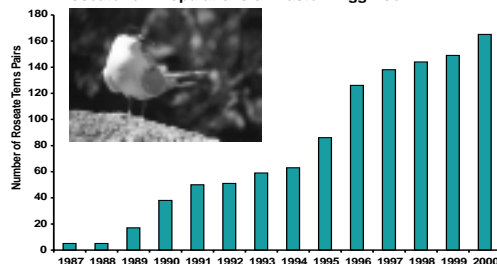


Photograph by Stephen Kress

ing insects and tiny shrimp. Laughing Gulls first nested at Egg Rock in 1983 and the colony has rapidly increased in recent years. In 2000, 966 pairs of Laughing Gulls nested at Egg Rock—a 47% increase since last year!

Common Eiders have benefited from the growth of the tern colony in at least two ways: Aggressive terns chase off predatory gulls; and the excrement from thousands of terns drenches the island vegetation with fertilizer. Raspberries, elderberries and dense stands of pasture grasses have increased in height and density, creating ideal eider nesting cover. The eider population at Egg Rock has grown from 53 in 1997 to at least 110 pairs in 2000. ❖

Roseate Tern Populations on Eastern Egg Rock



Photograph by Evelyn Weinstein

INSIDE

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MATINICUS ROCK UPDATE

RAZORBILL AND PUFFIN CENSUSES DOCUMENT RECORD NUMBERS

It took enormous effort to count most Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin nests at Matinicus this summer. By crawling into Razorbill nesting caverns and watching where puffins were delivering food, researchers discovered 136 active Razorbill nests and 203 puffin nests—by far the highest numbers ever recorded for both alcids. Razorbills first colonized “the Rock” in 1967 and the colony has been increasing ever since. The census emphasizes the significance of Matinicus Rock to Maine Coast Razorbills. After Machias Seal Island, Matinicus Rock is by far the largest of four other Maine Coast colonies. The puffin census reveals that the Matinicus Rock colony continues to increase—even though many Matinicus-hatched puffins (at least 14 of 150 breeders this year) have emigrated to nearby Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).



“Grubbing” for razorbills at Matinicus Rock yields 136 active nests. Pictured are (l to r) Chris Maranto and Forest Caskey.

Stephen Kress

RECORD NUMBERS OF MURRES VISIT MATINICUS ROCK

Common Murres once nested at the island, but the original population was lost due to eggging and hunting about 1840. Efforts to restore Common Murres to Matinicus Rock began in 1992, using wooden decoys and endless sound recordings (see *Egg Rock Update* 1992–94 and 1997). Murres were occasionally sighted prior to the start of this program, but the installation of the decoys and sound recordings clearly increased visitation. Each year by mid-May, decoys are placed on the ledge and murres begin visiting soon after. The greatest numbers arrive in June, but leave without nesting. This year, the trend was similar, but the number of birds visiting was twice that of any previous year, with a high count of 50 birds on June 15th. Among these, three pairs were obvious. Although no eggs were laid this year, the increased numbers of murre visitors offer encouragement that some may return next season to recolonize this southernmost historic nesting island.



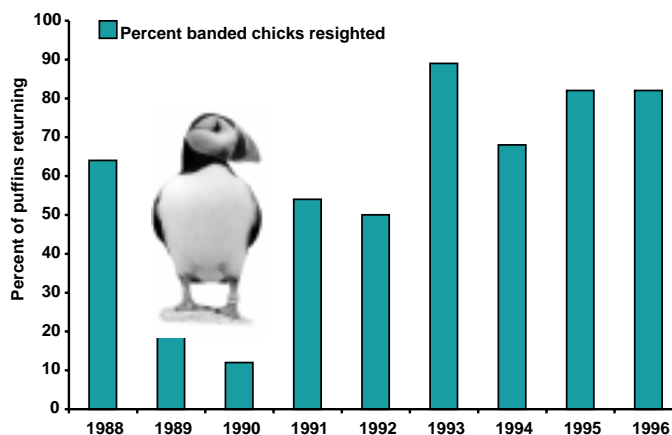
Common Murres resting with decoys at Matinicus Rock.

Laumyn Benedict

PUFFIN CHICK SURVIVAL

Chick survival is one of the best measures of success for determining the health of a seabird colony. To determine puffin survival rates at Matinicus Rock, researchers band 25–50 chicks each year with “field-readable plastic bands” and metal bands issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Observers head off to observation blinds daily where they conduct three-hour-long “stints” reading leg bands with powerful spotting scopes. The results of this long-term study demonstrate considerable annual variation, but on average, the return rate is remarkably high. The percent of puffins returning to Matinicus Rock varied from 12 to 89% with an average annual return rate of 58%. These are minimum numbers, as they do not include puffins that survived, but were not sighted at Matinicus Rock.

Survival of Matinicus Rock puffins to two or three years old.



Photograph by Stephen Kress



Stephen Kress

Each year 25 to 50 puffin chicks receive both “field readable” bands and metal bands that permit researchers to identify individual birds. Pictured (l to r) are André Breton, Julie Kleinhans, and Kent Buehrer.

TERN HIGHLIGHTS

Since 1984, National Audubon Society, wildlife agencies and other non-profit groups have worked together as the Gulf of Maine Seabird Working Group (GOMSWG). With the common goal of stopping a 50-year decline in Maine tern numbers, GOMSWG successfully engineered a plan to boost tern populations and restore highly productive colonies throughout the Gulf.

Summer 2000 saw both gains and setbacks to the plan—Roseate and Common Tern populations remained stable rather than increasing, and the total number of Arctic Terns declined slightly. These changes were due in part to the mysterious breakup of a 600-pair colony on Ship Island in Blue Hill Bay and severe predation by a mink and Black-crowned Night-heron at Jenny Island. These setbacks were offset by steady increases in Roseate Terns at Eastern Egg Rock and Stratton Islands, and further growth of the Common Tern colony at Egg Rock and the Arctic Tern colony on Seal Island NWR. Other good news for terns came from the Maine-New Hampshire border where the New Hampshire Audubon Society recorded spectacular growth of the restored Common Tern colony on Seevy Island. The wisdom of a management plan recommending many alternate breeding places was never more obvious than this summer, as safe nesting islands offered refuge to terns avoiding local disasters elsewhere. The following review focuses on highlights at Audubon-managed sanctuaries.



Mink illustration by Susan Shubel

the newly hatched tern chicks. Parental abandonment at night caused further losses, as the chicks were exposed to chilling rain. In total, the 1,050 pairs of Common Terns produced only 16 chicks this summer.

MATINICUS ROCK NWR

The Arctic Tern colony increased to 1,030 pairs this summer, producing 931 chicks, while Common Tern numbers remained similar to last year at 176 pairs.

POND ISLAND NWR

Common Terns increased to 33 nesting pairs, and 13 chicks reached fledging age. Productivity would have been higher, but predation by a Great Horned Owl plagued the island.

SEAL ISLAND NWR

Its remote location spared Seal Island from the severe predation problems which occurred at sites closer to the mainland. Common and Arctic Tern colonies grew to record high numbers at 1,205 and 890 pairs respectively, ranking Seal Island as host to the largest Maine tern colony. Ample herring and hake provided sufficient food to fledge 816 Arctic and 964 Common Tern chicks.



Steven Walker

Arctic Terns

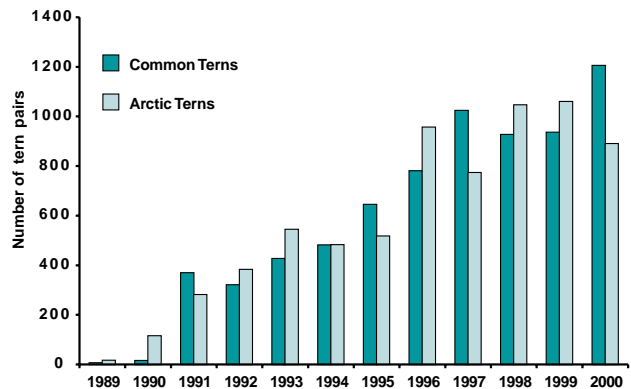
EASTERN EGG ROCK

Common and Roseate Terns increased to record high numbers at 1,443 and 136 pairs, with excellent productivity of 1.08 and 1.28 chicks per nest respectively. Arctic Terns declined to 85 pairs at Egg Rock—in part because they nest at the edge of the vegetation zone, where they are most vulnerable to occasional predation by Herring Gulls. Chick production was excellent this year, fueled by the best supply of herring recorded in recent years. Common Terns fledged 1,558 chicks, and Roseate and Arctic terns fledged 211 and 65 chicks respectively.

JENNY ISLAND

When the field camp was set up on Jenny Island this year, a cache of freshly killed Common Terns was discovered under the tent platform. This indicated that a mink was on the island. Before summer's end, 45 adults and nine chicks were lost to mink predation. This disturbance spooked all of the Roseate Terns from the island. In addition, a Black-crowned Night-heron ate most of

Common and Arctic tern populations on Seal Island N.W.R.



Photograph by Stephen Kress

STRATTON ISLAND

This southern Maine tern colony was the only successful tern nesting sanctuary between Eastern Egg Rock and the New Hampshire border. Roseate Terns increased for the fifth consecutive year reaching 104 pairs, representing 37% of the Gulf of Maine population. Common Tern numbers increased to 1,109 pairs and they fledged 1,219 young.



MATINICUS ROCK BECOMES A NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

On October 20, 1999, Matinicus Rock was included as a unit of the Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge. National Audubon Society will continue its long history of managing the island's seabirds. The partnership between Audubon and the US Fish and Wildlife Service is an excellent example of cooperative management. Audubon has managed seabirds at the island for nearly a century since lighthouse keeper Capt. William Grant was hired in 1901. The new National Wildlife Refuge status has already resulted in additional funds for much needed repairs of the landing slip, walkways and buildings. ❖



Stephen Kress

MANX SHEARWATERS VISIT MATINICUS ROCK AND EASTERN EGG ROCK

For the fourth consecutive summer, a Manx Shearwater frequented Matinicus Rock. In 1998, the shearwater (presumably a male) excavated a 19-inch deep burrow (see *Egg Rock Update* 1998) and returned to the burrow again in 1999. This season, the burrow measured 31 inches deep and contained fresh nesting material. Although a burrow was not discovered at Eastern Egg Rock, a single Manx Shearwater visited Egg Rock almost daily this season. Both the Egg Rock and Matinicus Rock shearwaters called frequently at night with their wild scream as they coursed low over the island. ❖

DEVIL'S SLIDE ROCK MURRE COLONY INCREASES TO 98 PAIRS

The newly restored Common Murre colony at Devil's Slide Rock increased to 98 pairs—a 40% increase since 1999. The long-established colony, located on the central California Coast near Half Moon Bay, was lost following the 1986 *Apex Houston* oil spill. Using social attraction techniques (decoys, mirrors, and sound recordings) developed on the Maine Coast, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated restoration in 1996 using funds obtained under the Clean Water Act. The Apex Houston Trustee Council funds the project. ❖



Mike Parker

The 2000 California Project Murre team

Leader

Mike Parker

Crew

Christine Hamilton
Ingrid Harrald
Hugh Knechtel
Martin Murphy
Victoria Slowik

Logistic

Support

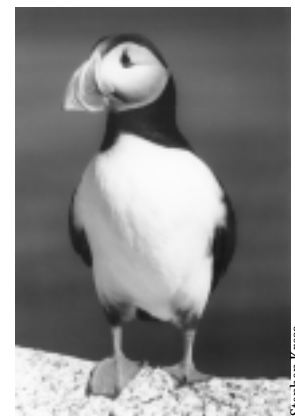
Harry Carter
Rick Golightly

NEW PUFFIN DATA BASE CREATED

Since Project Puffin began in 1973, researchers have tallied more than 30,000 sightings of Project-banded puffins at islands in the Gulf of Maine. This enormous database has the potential to tell researchers much about survival rates, inter-colony movements and behavior. With support from an anonymous donor, the Project hired André Breton, our Seal Island Supervisor, and Michael DeCola of OverByte Data Design, Inc. (Ithaca, NY) to create a database that would make the complete history of each project-banded bird instantly available to researchers. ❖

SEAL ISLAND NWR PUFFIN COUNT

The restored puffin colony on Seal Island NWR continued to show impressive gains this summer (see *Egg Rock Updates* 1998 and 1999). Puffins recolonized Seal Island in 1992, when seven pairs nested after a 105-year absence. The puffin nest count in summer 2000 tallied 126 active nests, a 10% increase over the 1999 count of 115 nests. ❖



Stephen Kress



CASPIAN TERNS MOVE TO RESTORATION SITE AT EAST SAND ISLAND

Social attraction techniques (decoys and sound recordings), combined with habitat preparation and gull control, encouraged most of the Caspian Terns in the Columbia River on the border of Washington and Oregon to relocate to East Sand Island this summer. The terns became highly controversial when they were nesting at Rice Island, located 16 miles farther up the Columbia River. Biologists discovered that the 8,000 pairs of terns on Rice Island (the world's largest Caspian Tern colony) were eating approximately 7 to 15 million salmon smolt (young salmon making their first trip from freshwater to the sea). Terns began moving to East Sand Island in 1999, and nearly all of the birds (7,800 pairs) shifted in 2000. Studies conducted this summer demonstrated that the proportion of salmon smolt in the tern diet was greatly reduced at the restoration site—from 91% at Rice Island to 44% at East Sand Island. ❖



Daniel Kobay



NORTHEAST TERN PLAN

A tern management plan drafted for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by Stephen Kress and Scott Hall is nearing completion. The Project began two years ago and will be presented this November at the annual meeting of the Waterbird Society to be held at the Manomet Center in Massachusetts on November 2, 2000. The plan includes maps and a thorough review of the historic distribution of coastal tern colonies from Long Island, New York to the Canadian Maritime Provinces. It also includes discussions of limiting factors and monitoring and management techniques useful for tern managers throughout the Northeast. ❖

THE ÎLE-AUX-PERROQUETS GANNET PROJECT

The Île-aux-Perroquets Gannet Colony Restoration Project completed its fourth field season this summer. This project is a joint effort by the Quebec-Labrador Foundation, the National Audubon Society, and the Mingan Island Cetacean Study. The goal of the project is to re-establish an historic gannet colony in the Mingan Archipelago off the Quebec North Shore. Northern Gannet decoys and recordings of the colony on Île-Bonaventure were installed on the island to mimic a real colony. In the mid-1800s, the gannet colony on Île-aux-Perroquets was reported to be immense, but the colony was abandoned after 1887, due to decades of overexploitation of fish for bait and disturbance from the construction of a lighthouse on the island.

The 2000 field season marked the fourth consecutive year that Northern Gannets landed among the decoys. Gannet activity in the area around the island was at its lowest since the project began in 1997. However, two gannets visited the decoys—offering encouragement that the social attraction method may one day bring these marine birds back “home.” ❖

The 2000 Gannet Watch Team

Frédéric Paquet and Jean-Philippe Albert

PARTNERS FOR HAWAIIAN SEABIRDS

In Hawaii, volunteers are helping to monitor albatross colonies, pick up and release fledgling Wedge-tailed Shearwaters downed by power lines, develop school curricula, and design roadside signs informing the public about Hawaiian seabirds. ❖

The 2000 Albatross Watchers & Set-up Crew

Karin Bernal	Ericka Ehrhorn	Lynnea Overholt
Marlee Breese	Beth Flint	Bob Pyle
Arlene Buchholz	Hattie Higa	Dan Sailer
Chad Castle	Ann Hudgins	Dave Smith
Pete Donaldson	Wendy Johnson	Katie Swift
Ian Draney	Gail Kaaialii	Hedeko Taketa
Vicki Dworkin	Lance LaPierre	Corrine Waterhouse
		John Wendel

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Beth Campbell
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Terry Goodhue
Sylvia Hatcher
Anthony Hill
Sharyn Hood
Susan M. Long
Stephen Marsh

Georgia Meyer
Sarah Morris
Jeffrey Rouse
Jessica Strauss
Tatiana Taranovski
Ann Townley
Josephine Trimble
Steven Walker
Stella Walsh-Wainer
Sharon Ann Woods

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

SEABIRD CENTER AT THE AUDUBON CAMP IN MAINE

Project Puffin and the Maine Audubon Society are making plans for creating the first Seabird Center in the United States. The new Center will be located on the mainland adjacent to the Audubon Camp on Hog Island, with views looking down Muscongus Bay. The center will complement the existing seasonal program at the Audubon Camp by offering a base for mainland-based classes throughout the year. The Center will also serve as a local community nature center and as a base for Project Puffin's research team. Interactive displays demonstrating the history of seabird conservation—emphasizing the model that people can make a difference for saving wildlife—will be included. Two important first steps were launched this summer.

The Pine Tree Trail

To create a buffer around the site of the future Seabird Center, the Pine Tree Conservation Society, Inc. purchased eight acres of ocean front property to the northeast of the existing Audubon property. On July 13th, Sally Jeffords and Chuck Radcliffe, and their children Sam and Charlotte, were on hand to dedicate a new public nature trail through the property.



Rosalie Borzilk

Ribbon-cutting for the new Pine Tree Trail. Left to right: Seth Benz, Director of the Audubon Camp in Maine; Charlotte Radcliffe, Sam Radcliffe, Stephen Kress, and Sally Jeffords.

Live-streaming Video

Two robotic video cameras were placed on Eastern Egg Rock in cooperation with SeeMore Wildlife, Inc., an Alaska-based company that has pioneered the use of video techniques for viewing wildlife in remote locations. Using a microwave transmitter located on Eastern Egg Rock, they transmitted live-streaming video footage of puffins and terns back to the mainland, where visitors could operate the cameras—panning and zooming in for closer views. The images were also relayed to the Internet. This pilot project is the kind of innovative exhibit that will be the hallmark of the new Seabird Center. ❖



Sarah Carr

Stephen Kress adjusts one of the robotic video cameras at Eastern Egg Rock while a Common Tern watches the procedure.

WEBSITE WINS AWARD!

When former intern Gerald Urquhart, now a professor at Michigan State University, offered to create a Project Puffin web site as a way of saying thanks for his summer among the puffins and terns, we had no way of guessing the importance of his extremely generous offer. In just a matter of weeks, Jerry assembled an extremely creative and attractive web site. It includes information about Project Puffin, puffin biology, and working on seabird islands. Online contribution and gift puffin adoption forms are also available, as is an archive of previous newsletters. An interactive “virtual tour of Eastern Egg Rock,” and seabird sounds are popular web attractions. The quality of the site was recognized when it received Audubon's “Best Site for State Offices and Centers Award.” The site will also post updated details about the seabird center and boat tours to see puffins. ❖



www.projectpuffin.org

PUFFIN PETE AND SEABIRD SUE

Pete Salmansohn, known widely among Maine school kids as “Puffin Pete,” will be handing over the wildly successful school outreach program on marine birds to Susan Schubel, educator, biologist, and supervisor of Matinicus Rock. Pete developed the program and over the last three years has built up a following among school classes in the mid-coast area. This year alone, he brought hands-on activities about seabirds and backyard birds to 1,693 Maine school children in 80 classrooms in 31 schools. Susan “Seabird Sue” Schubel will continue the Maine school outreach with some of her own creative programs, while Pete starts a new seabird outreach program on Long Island, NY. ❖

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



Egg Rock Update

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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 2000 Birdathon prizes
- Stan Atwood for providing equipment servicing and firearm safety lessons to our staff
- B & B Communications for providing Internet access to our Education Program
- Henry & Hilde Bird for use of their mainland dock by the Jenny Island crew
- Robert & Amy Campbell for hosting a reception at their home for Project Puffin friends
- Camp Kieve for assistance with creating the new Pine Tree Interpretive Trail at the Todd Wildlife Sanctuary
- Claw Island Foods Co. for permission to use their dock on Vinalhaven Island.
- 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
- Terry Dunning for providing space for the Jenny Island crew to park their cars
- John Fitzpatrick and the entire staff of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for continued cooperation with Project Puffin
- John Flood for building eight observation blinds for our research islands
- 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

- The Hawaii Division of Forestry and Dave Smith for their assistance with the Partners for Wildlife project
- Anthony Hill and Carlene Riccelli for donating a propane refrigerator and portable radios for the Seal Island research team.
- Sally Jeffords, the Radcliffe Family and the Pine Tree Conservation Society, Inc. for protecting land adjacent to the future Audubon Seabird Center
- Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lee for the gracious hospitality they provide the Stratton Island interns
- Prout's Neck Women's Auxiliary for supporting invasive plant control at Stratton Island
- Prout's Neck Audubon Society for purchasing a night-vision scope for Stratton Island
- Elliot Robinson for assistance with our field computers and battery storage
- Godfrey Rockefeller, Herb Pratt and Lucy LaCasse for always pulling through when the Stratton Island staff call for assistance
- Danial Zatz and the staff of SeeMore Wildlife, Inc. for installing and maintaining robotic video cameras at Eastern Egg Rock
- Stan Skutek and the staff of Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) for assistance and enthusiastic support of our work at Seal Island, Pond Island and Matinicus Rock NWRs
- Clark Smith and the staff of the Prout's Neck Yacht Club for their assistance with Stratton Island logistics
- Ken Schlather for his computer assistance
- Helen and Chris Tupper for providing storage, water, showers, logistics support and hospitality to our Jenny Island staff
- Dr. Gerald Urquhart for designing and managing the Project Puffin web site
- Steven Walker for photographing the Egg Rock puffins and providing the slides used in the Adopt-A-Puffin 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

1999-2000 CONTRIBUTORS SPECIAL GIFTS

In Memory of Jill Akel
Barbara Lott Kipp

In Memory of Michael Apgar
Jean Apgar through the Michael A. Apgar Memorial Fund

In Memory of Judith Lea Cherry
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In Memory of William Doeller
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In Memory of Clara H. Lebovitz
The Clara H. Lebovitz Maine Coast Sanctuary Internship Fund

In Memory of Marguerite Meek
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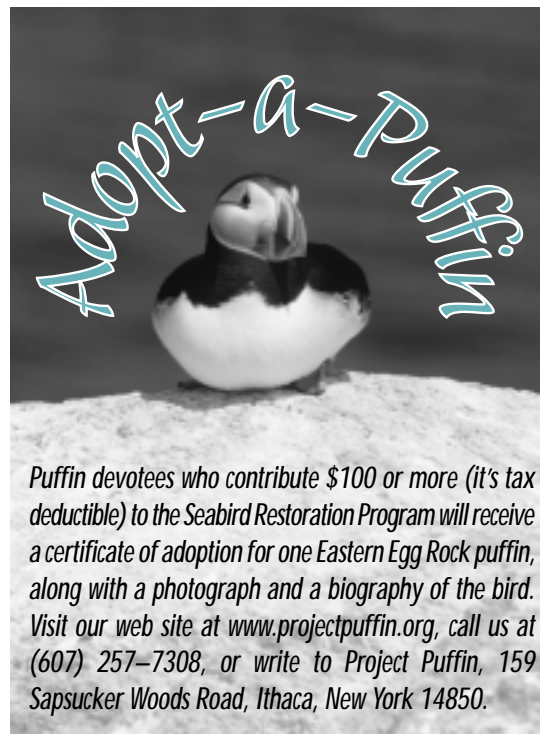
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