



Egg Rock Update

Newsletter of the Seabird Restoration Program
of the National Audubon Society

2006

MAINE PUFFIN COLONIES CONTINUE RECOVERY

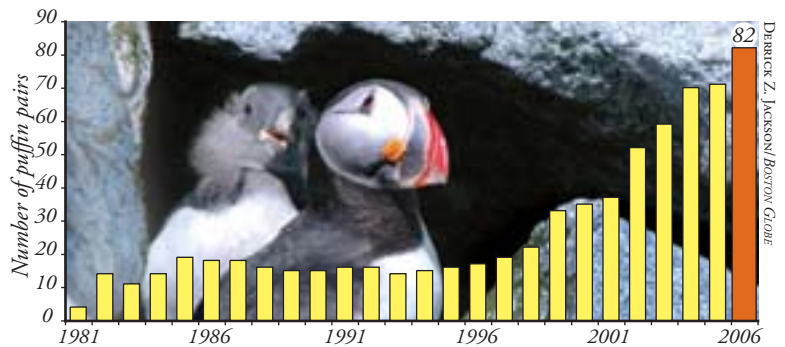
The restored puffin colonies at Eastern Egg Rock, Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and Matinicus Rock continued three decades of dramatic recovery. This is heartening news considering the setback experienced in summer 2005, when spring storms flooded many burrows, resulting in a temporary lull in the recovery.

Biologists at Eastern Egg Rock documented 82 puffin pairs, a 17% increase since 2005, including 10 new pairs. Among the nesting pairs was Yellow 54 (Y54), who has occupied burrow #3 for the past 25 years!

The increase was also strong at Seal Island NWR, where Audubon biologists documented a 16% increase to 336 pairs, including 50 new pairs. Most of these new pairs chose nesting burrows near other pairs, but several pairs selected isolated locations away from the central colony. These will likely attract more pairs next year, creating distinct sub-colonies that will make the population safer in the advent of future flooding or other local disasters.

The puffin population at Matinicus Rock also reached a new high count, with 310 pairs. This was a 21% increase over the 256 pairs counted at the island in 2003. The puffin colony on Petit Manan NWR has also increased—from 20 pairs in 2002 to 66 pairs this summer. ❖

Increase in Atlantic Puffin Pairs at Eastern Egg Rock, 1981–2006



DERBRICK Z. JACKSON/BOSTON GLOBE

Eastern Egg Rock and Seal Island NWR are both historic puffin nesting islands. The hunting of seabirds for food and feathers eliminated these colonies by 1887. To restore the colonies, Audubon cooperated with the Canadian Wildlife Service, USFWS, and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to move puffin chicks from Great Island, Newfoundland to Maine. Between 1973 and 1989, 954 chicks were reared and released at Egg Rock, and 950 at Seal Island. At both islands, it took eight years for puffins to nest.



BILL SCHOLTZ

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Y54

It's likely that Y54 was the first transplanted puffin to nest at Eastern Egg Rock. Now 29 years old, this summer he paired again with U75, his mate since 2002. Over the past 25 years Y54 has had three mates and produced 23 young, several of which have returned to Egg Rock and joined the breeding colony. This year researchers captured Y54 and gave him a new set of bands. He is in the running for the puffin longevity record, presently held by a 36-year-old Scottish puffin.

WORLD REPORT

The techniques that brought puffins and other seabirds back to Maine are now helping rare and endangered seabirds worldwide.

SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS

Torishima Island, Japan

About five million Short-tailed Albatross were slaughtered for feathers on Japanese islands between 1887 and 1902. Now, nearly all remaining birds nest on the upper slopes of the active Tusbame-zaki volcano, where they are threatened by eruption and burial in loose ash.

According to Hiroshi Hasegawa of Toho University, an April 2006 census found that the total population has grown to 1,830 birds. The program to lure some of the birds to more secure nesting habitat



A Short-tailed Albatross with its hungry chick.

has succeeded beyond his expectations. Since 1992, Dr. Hasegawa and colleagues from the Japanese Ministry of the Environment and Yamashina Institute for Ornithology have placed life-sized albatross decoys and sound recordings at a more stable location on the

island. One pair nested among the decoys in 1995, but it took ten more years before the colony increased to four pairs in 2005.

Last April, Dr. Hasegawa discovered that the colony among the decoys had increased to 15 pairs. Even though most of the new colony's albatross are first-time breeders, they achieved a nesting success of 87% (compared to 59% for the established colony on the volcano slope). The high nesting success and the presence of about 50 birds at the new colony provides solid encouragement for the continued growth. ❖

Information provided by Hiroshi Hasegawa, Toho University

ROSEATE TERNS

Dry Tortugas, Florida

Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma destroyed Pelican Shoal, a small island located five miles south of Key West. Prior to the 2005 storms, Pelican Shoal provided critical habitat for 300 pairs of Roseate Terns, a threatened species in Florida. Pelican Shoal was the only ground-nesting site for Roseate Terns in Florida (others nest on rooftops). Fortunately, the storms also improved tern habitat at Dry Tortugas National Park, a former nesting place for the species, located approximately 75 miles northwest of Pelican Shoal. The storms built up coral rubble, burying the vegetation that had overrun the former tern habitat.



Roseate Terns nested at Dry Tortugas among decoys and a solar-powered sound system.

To encourage Roseate Terns to recolonize the island, Ricardo Zambrano and Sharyn Hood of Florida's Fish and

Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Sonny Bass of the National Park Service, obtained Roseate Tern decoys from Mad River Decoy Company of Waitsfield, VT and others. Roseate Tern recordings from Eastern Egg Rock were obtained from the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Hood learned about social attraction while serving as a Project Puffin intern on Eastern Egg Rock. Decoys and recorded colony sounds played continuously helped bring the Roseate Terns back to the Dry Tortugas. Forty-two adults and 16 chicks were found among the decoys in late July. ❖

Information provided by Sharyn Hood, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

COMMON MURRES

Devil's Slide Rock, California

After 10 years, all of the decoys and vocalization playback equipment were removed from Devil's Slide Rock for the 2006 field season. Murres returned to the rock without the social attraction equipment in even stronger numbers, which confirmed that the colony was well established enough for the initial attraction phase of the program to end. The high count for the season was 670 murres on April 28th, comparing favorably to the 477 counted on May 16, 2005. A total of 361 breeding pairs nested in 2006, a 120% increase over the 164 pairs that nested in 2005, and a 90% increase over the previous high of



A Common Murre incubates its egg on Devil's Slide Rock. This was the first year without decoys.

190 pairs in 2004. However, for the second consecutive year, breeding success was low (0.29 chicks per pair), due to poor foraging conditions. Nonetheless, an estimated 105 chicks were produced in 2006, compared with 52 chicks in 2005. A live-streaming

“murre cam” shared intimate views of the colony with online viewers. The video stream, hosted by Audubon, will return in early March 2007. To view, visit <www.projectpuffin.org>.

The Devil's Slide Rock project began in 1996 in response to the 1986 spill of crude oil from the *Apex Houston*. The project is a partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Humboldt State University, and National Audubon Society. Prior to the spill, about 2,800 murres nested at this isolated rock located near San Francisco's Half Moon Bay. ❖

Information provided by Gerry McChesney, San Francisco Bay NWR. For further information see: <<http://www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges/Murre/murre-home.htm>>

PROJECT PUFFIN VISITOR CENTER



Ribbon cutting with (l to r) Stephen Kress, Mayor Brian Harden, and Downeast Energy's Cap't Puffin.

Project Puffin Visitor Center, Rockland, Maine, celebrated its grand opening on July 1, 2006 with a crowd of more than 200 enthusiastic seabird friends, including Brian Harden, the mayor of Rockland, and Robert Skogland, Maine's "Humble Farmer."

The new Center—in partnership with Maine Audubon—is located on Main Street, right at the hub of the museum and art gallery district. Offering exhibits that appeal to people of all ages, the Center highlights Project Puffin's success at bringing puffins and other rare Maine seabirds back to their historic nesting islands. Puffin Cams allow visitors to view puffins and other seabirds living on Seal Island NWR, 20 miles south of Rockland. This remarkable system beams real-time video directly to the Center. Films, exhibits, and lectures teach visitors about the future challenges and threats to ocean life, and how they can help protect puffins and their ocean habitat. Life-sized wall murals painted by outreach educator Susan Schubel bring puffins and seabirds to life.

Stop by the next time you are in Rockland!

Many thanks to Theresa Torrent-Ellis, Senior Planner for the Maine Coastal Program, who assembled a fine team of volunteers for the Project Puffin Visitor Center: Jonathan Fairbanks, Jean Murphy, Larry Murphy, Tom Schwab, and Sally Skillman

TOP THREE REASONS TO VISIT PROJECT PUFFIN VISITOR CENTER

1. Operate the Puffin Cams.

Three Puffin Cams—two above ground and one in an underground burrow—show close-up views of live birds in real time, projected onto a wall-sized screen. Visitors can control the cameras, burn their own DVD, and print photo souvenirs.

2. Climb into a puffin burrow.

Puffins nest underground, in burrows they dig with their bills and feet. Kids love climbing into our larger-than-life-sized model of a puffin burrow, where they can see a video of puffin chicks inside a real burrow and hear the puffin's growling sounds.



3. Record scientific observations from inside a bird blind.

Step into a real bird blind—the kind Project Puffin researchers use on islands. With clipboard and binoculars in hand, you'll take on the role of an Audubon scientist, as you view projected images of real birds and their habitats to learn how to count birds and identify fish delivered to seabird chicks.

And, while you're there, enjoy seabird art and photography by wildlife photographer Bill Scholtz; view our video *Project Puffin*—produced by Gangleon Films and winner of the 2006 International Wildlife Film Festival—that tells the story of Project Puffin's beginnings and accomplishments; and shop for great souvenirs and gifts at our gift shop.



"Seabird Sue" Schubel's murals depicting seabirds and aquatic life bring the Gulf of Maine indoors.



This was by far the wettest summer on record at our seven Maine field stations. At Eastern Egg Rock, where we have the longest set of weather data, we recorded over two feet of rain—more than three times higher than our 18-year average. Despite the rain, puffins thrived at all colonies and terns were productive at most. The summer was also notable for visits from several stray tropical seabirds.

STRATTON ISLAND

The colony of state-threatened Least Terns increased to 103 pairs by the end of summer, comprising most of Maine's population. Roseate Terns also returned *en masse*—making this the second-largest Gulf of Maine colony after Eastern Egg Rock. Eighty-four pairs of Roseate Terns nested, and most succeeded in fledging a chick. The Common Tern colony increased to 672 pairs, fledging about 700 chicks. Snowy Egret, Glossy Ibis, and Great Egret pairs increased respectively to 137, 119, and 22 pairs—a collective increase of 33%. Staff and volunteers from Maine Audubon and York County Audubon helped cut the strangling vines of invasive oriental bittersweet from heron-nesting trees. Researchers were also stunned when a Yellow-nosed Albatross (a sub-Antarctic stray) landed on Stratton Island in July!



Great Egret chicks

MATINICUS ROCK

A complete puffin census (the first since 2003) documented 310 pairs. Although Common Murres did not nest, they were present throughout most of the summer, with as many as 47 observed at once. After a setback due to flooding in 2005, the Razorbill colony grew to 292 pairs, a 23% increase since 2004. A Razorbill, banded 20 years ago as a chick, was found nesting in the same burrow this year. A Red-billed Tropicbird (whose nearest colonies are in the Caribbean) spent most of the summer at the island.

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD ON MATINICUS ROCK BY SCOTT HALL

EASTERN EGG ROCK

Although it was a soggy summer for resident interns, the rain did not deter the puffins that set a new high count for nesting pairs with 82 active burrows. Egg Rock again supported the largest colony of Roseate Terns in Maine, with 113 nesting pairs producing about 106 fledglings. The island is also home to almost half of the Laughing Gulls in Maine—this summer 1,486 pairs nested.

	Common Tern	Arctic Tern	Roseate Tern	Least Tern
Seal Island NWR	1,726	1,015	1	0
Matinicus Rock	292	1,017	0	0
Eastern Egg Rock	763	80	113	0
Pond Island NWR	480	5	1	0
Jenny Island	631	1	15	0
Outer Green Island	732	0	6	0
Stratton Island	672	10	86	58
Total	5,296	2,128	222	58

GULF OF MAINE SEABIRD WORKING GROUP DATA

Above: Number of pairs of nesting terns at Audubon sanctuaries as of the June 20, 2006 census. Yellow boxes indicate numbers that increased from 2005; gray boxes show declines.

SEAL ISLAND NWR

Seal Island now hosts the largest mid-coast Maine puffin colony, with 336 nesting pairs. Arctic and Common Tern colonies (also Maine's largest) increased by 459 pairs to 2,741 pairs—likely due to the abandonment of the tern colony at Machias Seal Island—and fledged 2,400 young. Atlantic herring comprised 25% of the diet of Common Terns and 19% of Arctic Terns, the best showing of this important prey in recent years (see *Egg Rock Update* 2005). Puffins also fed on the herring; the well-fed chicks fledged earlier than usual.

Increase in Atlantic Puffin Pairs at Seal Island NWR, 1992–2006



DERRICK Z. JACKSON/BOSTON GLOBE

EGG ROCK SUPERVISOR, CHRISTINA DONEHOWER, PHOTOGRAPHED BY SCOTT HALL





Biologists placed black plastic over invasive plants at Outer Green Island (right) to create bare ground which terns favor for nesting.

MATT MARTINKOVIC (2)

OUTER GREEN ISLAND

Although a Peregrine Falcon spooked the colony for nearly a week, and 19 inches of rain fell during the nesting season, most terns succeeded in fledging young. A total of 732 pairs of Common Terns and six pairs of Roseate Terns nested, producing about 825 fledglings. To create improved tern nesting habitat, researchers spread black plastic over 10 square meters of invasive grasses. The method showed promise as 75 pairs of Common Terns nested on the enhanced habitat. The most unusual bird of the summer was a very lost Bridled Tern—only the 2nd Maine record of this tropical species.



MATT MARTINKOVIC

A Bridled Tern spent most of the summer on Outer Green Island—only the second Maine record for this tropical species.

POND ISLAND NWR

The season began with a promising start as 480 pairs of Common Terns, five pairs of Arctic Terns, and one pair of Roseate Terns nested. A Great Horned Owl was trapped and released far from the island on June 14th, but the colony had already begun a nocturnal abandonment pattern. This exposed eggs and chicks to cool, damp nights. Shortly after the commencement of the tern hatch in late June, a Peregrine Falcon began frequenting the island, attacking the terns and scaring the colony. About 150 terns fledged.

JENNY ISLAND

Although the smallest of our managed sanctuaries, two-acre Jenny Island hosted a thriving tern colony this summer. A total of 631 pairs of Common Terns, 15 pairs of Roseate Terns, and one pair of Arctic Terns nested. These produced about 675 fledglings.

THE 2006 MAINE RESEARCH TEAM

First Row (left to right): Gina Mori (Seal Island NWR Resident Intern); Susan Meadows (Project Puffin Visitor Center Asst. Manager); Marlenne Rodriguez (Josephine D. Herz International Scholar); Steve Kress (Director) **Second Row (left to right):** Mila Kundu; Dr. Lei Cao; Paula Shannon (Matinicus Rock Supervisor); Juliet Lamb; Katherine Fourhman; Pete Salmansohn (Education Coordinator); Scott Hall (Research Coordinator); Rosalie Borzik (Associate Director) **Third Row (left to right):** Christina Donehower (Eastern Egg Rock Supervisor); Beth MacLeod; Emily Runnells; David McCartt; Matt Klosterman; Frank Mayer (Matinicus Rock Resident Intern); Ian Martin; Nicholas Metheny; Noel Dodge (Pond Island NWR & Jenny Island Supervisor); Jeff Kimmons (Egg Rock Resident Intern); Suzanne Sanborn (Stratton Island Supervisor); Debbie Wood (Gifts Manager); Matt Martinkovic (Outer Green Island Supervisor) **Absent from photo:** Bill Baker; Justin Brackett; Andre Breton (Database Manager); Mollie Cupp; John Drury; Michelle Fournier; Kelly Fuhrmeister; Ted Gaine; Peter Gawne; Kirk Gentalen; Frank Governali; Mary Roman Gunther; Nicki Hall; Gabriel Johnson; Robert Lambert (Stratton Island Resident Intern); Robert Lastovica; Mandy Lightcap; Ruth Likowski (Office Assistant); Anthony Liss; Beth McDonald; Jenna McMahon; Fletcher Meyers (Project Puffin Visitor Center Supervisor); Terry Mingle (Assistant to the Director); Thomas Mullin (Naturalist); Joseph Oddi; Keri Parker; Kristin Pennock; Ellen Peterson; Maggie Lee Post; Susan Burnham Raven; Nicholas Record; Emily Ryan; Sue Schubel (Education Outreach Specialist); Sam Slater; Bill Scholtz; Richard Smith; Noah Strycker; Chris Tupper; Cricket Tupper; Stella Walsh; Carlos Zavala (Seal Island NWR Supervisor)



ANTHONY LISS

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

INTERNATIONAL INTERNS JOIN PROJECT PUFFIN STAFF

Project Puffin has welcomed international interns before, but this summer's staff certainly ranked as our most cosmopolitan team. Interns from China, Mexico, and Peru traveled to Maine to learn about seabird restoration with hopes of applying the techniques in their home countries.

Audubon's Josephine D. Herz International Seabird Fellowship recipient, Marlene Rodriguez of Ensenada, Mexico, is a biologist with Island Conservation, an organization that works to restore natural ecosystems on islands worldwide. The fellowship provided her with travel support and the opportunity to work with Audubon biologists on Maine seabird islands. She hopes to use this experience to restore

seabird-nesting islands off the west coast of Baja, Mexico.

This year's international interns joined a team that included students from 13 states and provinces, including several graduate students. Project Puffin also hosted 24 volunteers, each of whom contributed at least two weeks of time. This summer was notable for including aviculturists from eight zoos and aquariums that maintain collections of puffins and penguins. These included Sea World San Diego, Sea World Orlando, New England Aquarium (Boston, MA), Henry Dorley Zoo (Omaha, NE), Akron Zoological Park (OH), Aquarium of the Pacific (Long Beach, CA), National Aquarium in Baltimore, and the St. Louis Zoo. ❖



Bill Scholtz

Marlene Rodriguez of Ensenada, Mexico is the 2006 Josephine D. Herz International Seabird Fellowship recipient.

PUFFIN ISLAND CD-ROM

Coming soon—*Puffin Island*, a new CD-ROM featuring animation, video clips, and photos of puffins and other seabirds. Students learn about ocean life by vicariously sitting in observation blinds, reading puffin leg bands, and studying feeding behavior. This CD was created by D-SCAPE Interactive, LLC. of Hope, NJ with support from the Dorr Foundation. Audubon's Pete Salmansohn is the author. ❖



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- Late-model **compact car** for our school outreach program
- Late-model **mini-van** to transport staff and field equipment

Please call (607) 257-7308

See Puffins in Maine!

Join Audubon interpretive guides aboard puffin-watching boat tours to Eastern Egg Rock. Since tours began in 1988, more than 50,000 passengers have enjoyed great views of puffins and other seabirds and learned about the ecology of the Maine coast while helping the Seabird Restoration Program. A portion of each ticket price is donated to Audubon for the management of Eastern Egg Rock.



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(800) 633-3244 or (207) 633-2626
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Bill Scholtz

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In addition, we thank Brad Allen 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 Charlie Blair, Brian Benedict 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, which are administered by the Refuge. We also thank the Prout's Neck Audubon Society for their loyal support for our work on Stratton Island.

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