



Friends of Maine's Seabird Islands

Becoming Friends of Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

2015 Highlights

Out with the old, in with the new !

As we prepare to say farewell to 2015 and greet a new year, the Friends of Maine's Seabird Islands (FOMSI) is preparing to enter 2016 with a new name. When FOMSI was established in 2003, our name was chosen to reflect the critical importance of the islands as nesting habitat for seabirds. As we have come to know the refuge better, we have realized that the islands provide so much more: nesting habitat for eagles and herons; stopover sites for multitudes of migrating songbirds, shorebirds and bats; pupping areas for seals; and places that people treasure for their beauty, lighthouses and recreational opportunities. In addition, the refuge has mainland units that protect other coastal habitats and offer more opportunities for hiking and wildlife watching. Since the refuge is about so much more than seabirds, we are changing our name to underscore that we support everything that the Refuge has to offer. Our new name reflects our commitment to showcase the Refuge in all its diversity.



The magnificent cliffs of Eastern Brothers Island

What has *not* changed is our need for your support. We rely on individual and business donors like you to support Refuge research programs, to offer educational programming to schools and community members, to create new exhibits, and so much more. Learn about some of this year's accomplishments on page 2, and see page 4 to learn how you can support our work—by becoming a donor, volunteering your time, or by helping us spread the word about the Refuge and its many public programs.

Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company and National Wildlife Refuge Association Provide Support

Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company donated use of their boat for an evening seabird-viewing trip to Petit Manan Island. This popular annual fundraising event, this year co-sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association, brought together FOMSI supporters on July 26th to enjoy good company, a live auction, Divining Rod wine graciously provided by Janice and Marc Mondavi and hors d'oeuvres provided by FOMSI's board members.

In addition to sponsoring this trip, Bar Harbor Whale Watch donated \$1,250 to support our programs, and also sells FOMSI buttons on its seabird-watching trips to Petit Manan Island, which attract thousands of visitors.

We greatly appreciate their continued generous support!



Birds outside!



Good food and friends inside!

A Year of Progress—Thanks to You!

At the Visitor Center . . .

Staffing—FOMSI recruited two terrific student interns, Rebecca Hopkins from Cornell University, and Jaclyn Robidoux, from the University of New Hampshire. Together, they helped keep the refuge's Rockland headquarters building and grounds in shape, greet visitors and assist us with a variety of tasks during the busy summer months. Your donations allowed FOMSI to attract quality applicants like Rebecca and Jaclyn.

Our regular (and extraordinarily dedicated) volunteers Carol and Kevin Adams were on hand every Wednesday in July and August to show films and keep the nature store open. Thank you!

Visitor numbers are up!

Thanks to supporters like you, we have increased our visibility, resulting in steadily climbing numbers of visitors. We doubled the number of visitors to the center (from 419 in 2014 to 957 so far in 2015). Your support also allowed us to have Carney Doucette arrange programs and run the art gallery. We were able to provide 31 public programs and a number of Art Walk evenings, which were attended by 738 people. Your continued support will help us sponsor even more fun and educational events in 2016.

Open House

On May 2, FOMSI hosted an open house to screen our new orientation film and to show off our new replica island, giant coast map, and several other new exhibits. It was a well-attended celebration that recognized the generosity of our donors and the great progress we have made to welcome visitors to the Rockland center.



Cutting the ribbon - at last!

Youngster finding nests



Another ribbon to cut!

Audrey Leeds Miller, Kim Walker and Brian Reilly by Patti Reilly Mem. Wall



Rebecca and Jaclyn refurbish decoys for Eastern Bros. I.

Whales and Monarchs and Bats!

Oh My!

Thanks to the family of the late sculptor (and retired Service biologist) Alfred Godin, the refuge's visitor center was lucky to have a collection of Godin's bronze whale sculptures on loan to display. With Godin's art as inspiration, we hosted a number of programs about whales. With your help we presented popular programs about right whales, the feeding strategies of whales, scrimshaw, marine mammal strandings, and a humpback whale necropsy. A special children's program gave young participants a chance to assemble a small whale's skeleton.

Significant declines in the populations of monarch butterflies and bats, both in Maine and across the U.S., spurred our summer interns to prepare special programs to educate visitors about the threats to these important pollinators.



Assembling whale bones

Bat Day

On Halloween, 100 enthusiastic local supporters turned out at the visitor center to help us build 50 bat roost boxes—part of a nationwide challenge to set the Guinness Book World Record for largest number of bat boxes built in a day. We could not have done it without Rankin's Hardware and Lumber Supply in Camden, which donated the lumber, and members of Chris Felicetti's shop class at Camden Hills Regional High School, who made the kits. Refuge staff, FOMSI volunteers and Chris and his students provided tools and encouragement as the participants assembled the houses.

Annie Kassler delivered several programs about bats, FOMSI volunteers offered bat cookies, bat temporary tattoos and children's bat-themed crafts. Popular children's book author and illustrator Brian Lies arrived in his bat-mobile to read from his whimsical bat tales.



Batmobile, Brian Lies entertains, Coleman and Isaac Swain show off their completed bat houses

Films For cabin-fevered folks waiting for Midcoast Maine's record snows to disappear, FOMSI offered a series of films last winter and again in the spring highlighting extinct and endangered birds, including passenger pigeons, condors and red knots. Over the summer we sponsored a film series on some of our nation's (and the National Wildlife Refuge System's) conservation heroes: Rachel Carson, Ding Darling, Mardy Murie and Aldo Leopold.

Art Gallery The popular art gallery on the second floor of the refuge visitor center again was filled with beautiful, nature-inspired artwork and FOMSI regularly participated in the First Friday Artwalk evenings in Rockland.

Upcoming programs This fall, we began offering a "virtual tour" of the National Wildlife Refuge System, starting with Refuge Managers talking about their refuges in Maine. This series will continue in 2016. We hope you can join us!



Congresswoman Chellie Pingree Visits Center

On July 17, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (Maine District 2) toured our Rockland refuge headquarters and visitor center with Maine State Representative Chuck Kruger (District 92). We presented Pingree with a plaque recognizing her support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The fund, which derives its revenue from offshore oil and gas leases, uses no taxpayer dollars. It is an important tool to purchase land for the refuge system. The fund expired the end of September and Congresswoman Pingree is part of a large, bi-partisan group of U.S. Representatives seeking to reauthorize this important conservation legislation.

Left to right: Refuge Manager Beth Goettel, FOMSI Treasurer Tom Goettel, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, FOMSI vice-chairperson Meriwether Gill

Our mission is “. . . To support the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge in its efforts to conserve, protect and enhance the rich diversity of coastal habitats, seabirds, and other wildlife.”

We do this by: raising funds to directly support the refuge’s programs; by volunteering; by providing educational exhibits, materials, and programming; and through partnerships and advocacy.

We hope you will continue to support us by sending a donation in the enclosed envelope or via our web site!

Want all the news? You can sign up to receive email announcements of upcoming programs and manager’s weekly notes during the field season. Just contact us!

Contact us at:

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Find us on the web:

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Thanks to everyone for all of your help!

We couldn't do what we do without our board members , volunteers and contributors.

Board members:

Scott Hess, Chair
Meriwether Gill, Vice-Chair
Dick Tomeo, Secretary
Tom Goettel, Treasurer
Pam Bryer
Penny Read
Charlie Walsh

Volunteers:

Carol and Kevin Adams
Ann Harrison
Annie Kassler
Sandy Hobbs
Tracey Ames
Julie Stiler
Carney Doucette

Contributors:

You!



Island researchers are thrilled to see their first chick!



Petit Manan Island at sunset