

2023 Annual Report

FRIENDS OF MAINE COASTAL ISLANDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Changes
Begin

Top Priority:
Interns on Islands

Stories
Worth Telling

Tracking
Resources

Resiliency and
Going Forward



Foreword

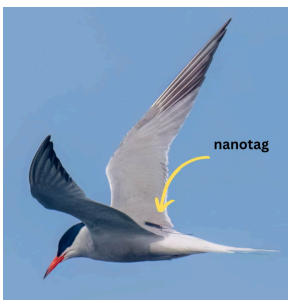


2023 was a year of transition: seabirds nested at different times, and on different islands. Some Terns returned extra early, others extra late - change was in the air.

The Friends of Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge (FOMCI) also saw changes in resources following the pandemic that resulted in hard decisions. After 10 years of service as Outreach Coordinator, Carney McRae (upper left photo) moved into a Volunteer position. The Friend's Board saw transitions, too: much appreciation to Penney Read and Kevin Adams who each served nine years. Theo Pratt, Treasurer, also said goodbye. New Board members joined, and new Volunteers stepped up to support the mission of the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

Change was also in the air for the Refuge as Deputy Refuge Manager, Eddy Edwards, retired. Eddy was the originator of "Bird Time on the Coast", a popular birding program created in partnership with FOMCI. In his new life, Eddy graciously offered to lead birding expeditions as a fundraiser for FOMCI.

Interns on Islands



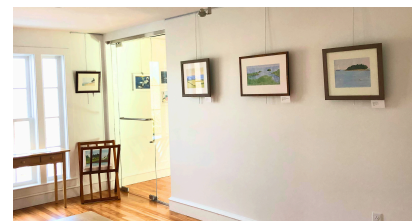
FOMCI's top priority was to support the summer Interns placed on the islands where seabird nesting colonies are being reestablished and sustained. In 2023, FOMCI provided the stipends of four Interns working 24/7 on the islands from 8 to 12 weeks. Along with protecting the breeding seabirds and assisting researchers collect data, several Interns provided virtual island tours to guests in the Visitor Center using Zoom technology. You can see these "Live from.." recordings on FOMCI's YouTube channel - for example: [🌐 Live from Metinic Island](#) You can also read the Interns' 2023 posts on the *"Summer with the seabirds"* blog: [🌐 Summer with the seabirds](#)



Stories Worth Telling

FOMCI's second priority was to tell the stories of the Refuge's successful conservation efforts at the Visitor Center in Rockland.

- FOMCI's part-time Interpretive Guide, Tori Tibbetts, and 31 Volunteers shared the Refuge success stories with visitors.
- School and community groups participated in 11 educational programs for 215 students, and virtual programs on Zoom and YouTube reached 417 viewers.
- FOMCI Volunteers continued the "Bird Time on the Coast" series, providing guided bird walks. The 16 walks attracted 227 participants. Eight adult programs attracted 177 participants.
- In early spring, Tori and Volunteers created a 3-hour "Beginning Birder" workshop to introduce 17 local participants to this wonderful activity.
- Mid-summer, we featured Bob Duschenes, a well-known Maine birder and guide, on our annual Seabird Cruise to Petit Manan Island. This fundraiser, through the generous support of the Bar Harbor Whale Watch Co., is always a treat no matter the weather. Along with spotting birds and other sea life, the 50 guests could ask the island Interns questions by radio. FOMCI Volunteers provided delicious snacks.



Art Gallery and Nature Store

FOMCI engaged adult and youth artists to show and sell their work in the **MCINWR Art Gallery: four shows attracted 368 attendees.**

Offering a range of thoughtful merchandise for adults and children, the **Nature Store delivered the store profits to support both FOMCI and the Island Interns.**

FOMCI asked Jill Peltó, climate artist and scientist, to paint a scene incorporating scientific graphs to show Puffin and Tern productivity rates in context with rising sea temperatures. A limited number of signed, full-color Giclee prints are for sale in the Nature Store, and on the website:

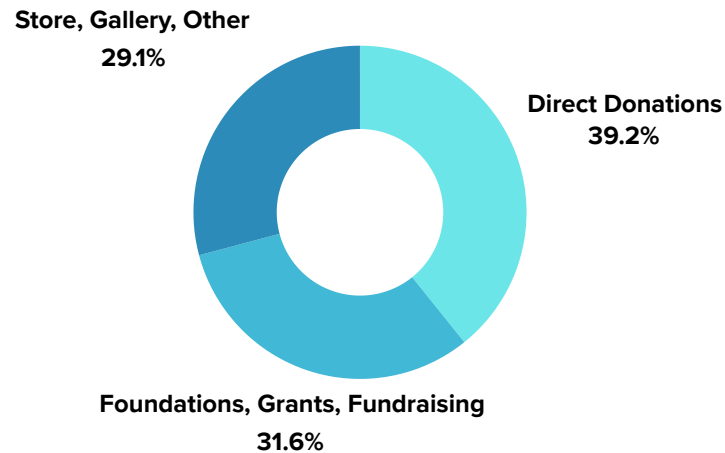
🌐 Friends of Maine Coastal Islands | National Wildlife Refuge :

Tracking Resources

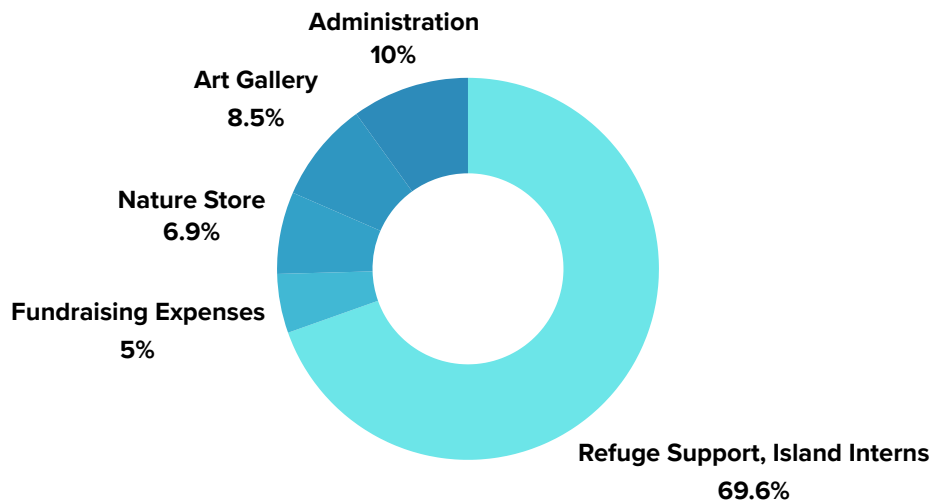


In May, the Refuge asked for **FOMCI's help to finalize the purchase of 3-acre in-holding on Metinic Island**. We were able to provide the final \$10,000 to ensure the purchase. On Metinic, the Island Interns protect and study the nesting Common and Arctic terns, along with Leach's storm petrels and Black guillemots. Having a "nest egg" allowed FOMCI to respond quickly to the Refuge needs.

FOMCI income in 2023 was \$85,497.



FOMCI expenses in 2023 were \$98,441.



In summary, at the beginning of 2023, FOMCI's combined assets were \$192,639. and as the year ended the accounts totaled \$185,652.

Social Media and Remote Viewers

FOMCI's Facebook page interactions increased **by 72%**, reaching **12K viewers**. The site had 779 content interactions **up 65%** from 2022, and 101 link clicks, **up 53%** from 2022. Many of the link clicks yielded donations. **Virtual programs on Zoom and YouTube reached 417 viewers**.

The Joy of Discovery at the Visitor Center

A visitor study confirmed that both locals and visitors “discover” the Visitor Center. Guest book comments tell us that visitors appreciate the building’s beauty, and enjoy the range of informal learning experiences about conservation facilitated by FOMCI Staff and Volunteers. **In total 2,848 guests were welcomed at the Visitor Center by FOMCI Staff and Volunteers on behalf of the Refuge.**

Resiliency and Going Forward

In December of 2023, two severe winter storms battered the Refuge islands and mainland coastlines. The fate of the seabirds wouldn’t be known for another five months. But like the seabirds, FOMCI carried on. **We are very grateful for 3,130 hours of service provided by the Board and Volunteers.**

2023 FOMCI Board of Directors

Penney Read, *President /Chair*
Kevin Adams, *Vice Chair/Secretary*
Theo Pratt, *Treasurer*
Lyndsay Vachon, *Interim Treasurer*
Shane Eubanks, *Interim Secretary*
David Brakke
Kate Doiron
Judy Hengerer
Barbara Mogel
Don Reimer
Carl J. Solberg

2023 FOMCI Volunteers

Carol Adams • Kevin Adams •
Sherrill Baumgartner • Ann Boover • Jim Carlson
• Maeve Cosgrove • Keifer Erwin • Kay Etheridge
* Marion Gray • Susan Keefer • Kristen Lindquist
• Carney McRae • Tami Motte • Barbara Mogel •
Gini Noble • Steve Norris • Jeanne Pipicello •
Theo Pratt • Meg Rasmussen • Penney Read •
Carla Skinder • Cyrene Slegona * Tina Streker

Volunteer Support Personnel

Carol Adams, *Nature Store Manager*

Part-time Staff

Carney McRae, *Outreach Coordinator*
Tori Tibbetts, *Interpretive Guide*



FOMCI's annual "Puffin Cruise" generates funding for the Island Interns, thanks to the generosity of the Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company in Bar Harbor, Maine. This year, the costumed seabird greeters for FOMCI's fundraiser were Career Discovery Interns supported by The Conservation Students Association. We thank them all for their enthusiasm!

- Nina Silvia, Rachel Carson NWR
- Cynthia Jimenez, Maine Coastal Islands NWR
- Madison Martinez, Parker River NWR.



Looking Forward

These are some of the reasons for FOMCI's optimism:

- **COUNTLESS** Terns, Puffins, Razorbills, Petrels, Guillemots, Gulls, Eagles and other marine animals found a home on Refuge islands in 2023.
- **ENERGIZED** Board Members and Volunteers, who serve on the Art Gallery and Events Committees, are planning an active calendar for 2024.
- FOMCI has an expanded group of **DEDICATED and FUN** Volunteers, who learned about the Refuge on the "Bird Time on the Coast" walks, and then gathered monthly in the winter months for nature themed game night, cultivating new Wingspan and Ecologies players.



With Gratitude

In January 2023, we lost two FOMCI supporters who truly loved and supported the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge.



Beth Goettel, Refuge Manager for the Maine Coastal Islands NWR, April 2008 to December 2016

During Beth's tenure, she worked with the Friends to purchase and renovate the 9 Water Street building to become a premier Visitor Center. She was instrumental in adding two popular exhibits: the large map wall showing the entire coastline of Maine from New Hampshire to Canada, highlighting the growing list of islands protected by the Refuge for wildlife. She also managed the creation of the replica "Seabird Island" for children and families to learn about seabird conservation. Both exhibits are highly memorable, and provoke joy and curiosity for visitors of all ages.



Kirk Rogers, nature photographer, was a friend of the Refuge for 14 years, capturing the seabirds and island life of the Refuge staff and Interns. Shortly before his passing, he exhibited some of his many photographs taken on the Refuge islands at the Maine Coastal Islands NWR Art Gallery, and his photography is prominent in the Visitor Center. The Refuge has permission to continue the use his iconic photographs, such as many of the bird images used in this report to honor his memory.

Gifts in their memory can be made on the Friends' website.

All donations will support the mission of the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge.



Contact Us

For further information, please reach out to us at info@mainecoastislands.org

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<https://mainecoastislands.org>

Facebook and Instagram: **Friends of Maine Coastal Islands NWR**