



Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Formerly Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge



2004 Program Highlights

Planning:

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan Released to Public

2004 Highlights

- Comprehensive Conservation Plan released to Public
- Record Numbers of Seabirds Nest on Refuge Island
- Universal Signing Project to protect most significant nesting islands
- Eider survival and recruitment study surpasses 5000 ducks banded
- Little Spoon Island added to Petit Manan NWR
- Charlie Blair takes the helm as new Refuge Manager replacing Stan Skutek
- Petit Manan's name was administratively changed to Maine Coastal Islands NWR to better reflect the current refuge's scope and future vision presented in the CCP.

After several years of effort, Petit Manan's draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan was unveiled to the public during four public meetings in June. Highlights of the plan are listed below:

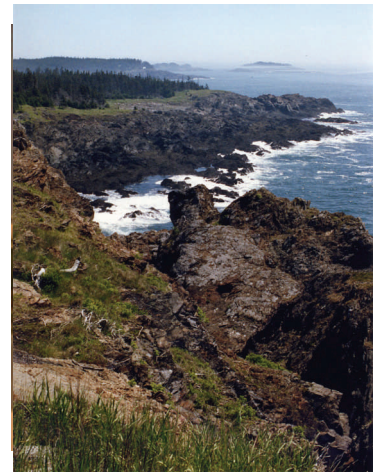
Land acquisition- The refuge's existing land base includes 7,600 acres within three mainland units and 46 islands. The plan would expand the refuge to include 153 acres of mainland property and 2,314 acres on 87 islands to protect nationally significant seabird, wading bird and bald eagle nesting sites.

Biological program- Six new islands would be selected to restore seabird populations and habitat. Biological inventories and monitoring programs would expand.

Public use program- The program would grow to include environmental education workshops, programs on commercial tour boats, construction of additional trails and parking at the Gouldsboro Bay, Sawyer's Marsh and Corea Heath divisions. The hunt program would expand to include deer hunting on Petit Manan Point. The plan also highlights the need for the creation of a Coastal Education Center.

Wilderness designation- The plan recommends wilderness designation for 3,125 acres on 13 islands within the refuge as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

During the public process the Service received 594 public comments. We received wide support for continued island



87 Nationally Significant Nesting Islands are proposed for addition to the Refuge

acquisition, designation of 13 islands as wilderness, and for the creation of a Coastal Education Center. The Final Plan will be forwarded to Washington for approval in January.

Seabird Successes:

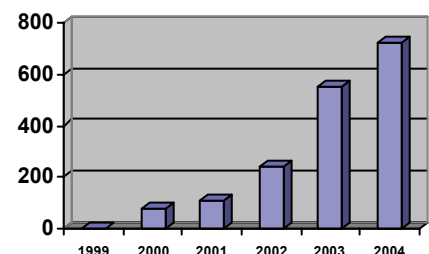
Metinic Island Tern Colony- Exceeds Historic High!

Metinic Island is located 12 miles south-east of Rockland and has been the focus of a tern restoration program since 1998. The restored tern colony continued to grow again this year with 723 pairs of terns nesting. The previous record for terns occurred in 1984 when an estimated 600 pairs nested on the island. This seasons count included 320 common terns, 403 Arctic terns, and one pair

of federally endangered roseate terns. Researchers also documented 104 bird species during their summers work.

Interns have annually spent the summers living with the terns monitoring population growth, productivity, survival, and conducting feeding and behavior studies from blinds. In addition they control nesting and predatory gulls, and fence out resident sheep.

Metinic Tern Recovery





Petit Manan Island: First Successful Razorbill Nesting

The alcid colony at Petit Manan Island continued to increase this year with 35 pairs of Atlantic puffin and over 150 pairs of black guillemot nesting. For the first time a pair of razorbills successfully nested joining the other eight seabird species nesting on the small 16 acre island. Razorbills have shown interest in the island for years with loafing numbers growing annually. This year 84 razorbills were observed around the island in June. Razorbills nest on only six islands within Maine including four refuge islands.

Petit Manan's tern colony also grew again this year with a total of 2,252 nests counted including 911 Arctic terns, 1,312 common terns, and 29 pair of federally endangered roseate terns. This year's tern reproductive success was hampered by a combination of food shortages and extreme weather. A cold rain storm in June (temps in the upper 30's) claimed 50% of tern chicks this year.

This year over 25,000 eco-tourists aboard commercial tourboats enjoyed the sights

and sounds of Petit Manan's restored seabird colony. For the first time this year, island researchers were able to talk with passengers daily via a remote microphone and share research updates and Refuge outreach messages.



Seal Island NWR – Atlantic Puffins increase by 31%

Seal Island NWR, located 22 miles southeast of Rockland, is cooperatively managed by National Audubon Society and the refuge. A restoration program began on the island back in 1984 when puffin chicks were transplanted from Great Island, Newfoundland and hand raised in artificial burrows. The colony has since grown from seven nesting pair in 1992 to this year's record of 290 pair. Eighty

percent of these pairs successfully raised young which bodes well for the future of this growing colony.

Terns re-colonized Seal Island in 1989 when 17 pairs nested. The colony has shown dramatic increases since with this year's tern colony reaching 2,339 nests. The island has become the largest tern colony in Maine hosting 1172 Arctic terns and

1167 common terns.

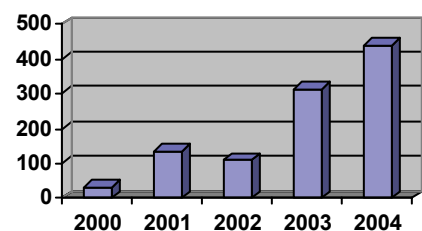
Seal Island also hosted two breeding pairs of razorbills and two pair of roseate terns. Nineteen great cormorants and several hundred black guillemots also summer on Seal Island. The extensive rock jumble on the shoreline combined with diverse upland habitats make Seal Island a premier seabird colony.

Pond Island NWR – Tern Colony Continues Growth

Pond Island NWR, located at the mouth of the Kennebec River, is cooperatively managed by National Audubon Society and the refuge. Tern restoration began on the island in 1996 when decoys and a solar powered sound system were used to lure terns back to their historic breeding island. This summer 429 common terns nested on Pond Island, an increase of 119 pairs from last season. Roseate tern numbers also climbed from two pairs in 2003 to 9 pairs this year.

Despite early season successes, the island was once again plagued by a host of predators including great horned owls, gulls, a great blue heron and a mink. Reproductive success was also affected by an unknown disease which was found in about 30% of hatched chicks. Of the chicks showing symptoms over 80% died. Specimens are being analyzed to determine causes of this outbreak.

Pond Island Tern Recovery



Common Eider Study surpasses 5,000 eiders banded

Beginning in 2002, Petit Manan NWR working jointly with Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife biologists, embarked on a long-term banding effort to determine survival, recruitment and recovery rates of common eiders in the Atlantic coast population. Nesting females are captured using hand nets on select islands and large rafts of flightless birds are “herded” into traps using kayaks and motorboats. These methods have proven extremely

successful with a total of 5,569 eiders banded over the last three years. This season we caught and banded 233 molting birds at Metinic and 745 eiders at Petit Manan Island.

Information gathered from this long-term project (5-10 years) will help managers better understand eider movements, age of first reproduction, survival and recruitment.



Eider banding crew at Petit Manan Island

Universal Seabird Nesting Sign produced to protect most important islands

Recreational boating along the Maine coast has been steadily increasing each year. There has been a boom in coastal kayaking, with Maine's long coastline and many islands providing a growing attraction for resident and summer visitors. With this rise in recreational boating, there has been a growing number of disturbances to fragile seabird nesting colonies. Although a few of these islands had signs indicating a closure period from April

1–August 31, they required boaters to land on the island to read the signs often creating unnecessary disturbance. Existing signs also took on different forms depending on who owned the island.

Beginning in the spring of 2005 the refuge, with the help of our conservation partners, will install signs on the most important seabird nesting islands including refuge, state, and privately owned islands. The

sign format (2'x3') will provide a visual image that will be observable from the water in hopes of preventing landings. The outreach campaign will include informational signs at 70 marine launch sites, a media campaign, and brochures that will be given to marine boaters at the time of registration and to guides and marine boating supply stores. Friends of Maine Seabird Islands will assist the refuge with outreach efforts.

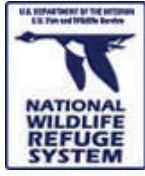


Little Spoon Island added to Petit Manan NWR

Little Spoon Island located in the town of Isle au Haut, Knox County, became the 46th island owned and managed by the refuge. Negotiations on the property dated back to 1994 when it was recognized as an important seabird island lacking long-term protection. The 29 acre island supports nesting common eider, black guillemots, herring gulls, black-

backed gulls, double crested cormorants, and great cormorants. Great cormorants are rare along the Maine coast nesting on just seven islands. Historically the island was also important for common terns with over 1,000 terns recorded in 1989.





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Find us on the web:

<http://petitmanan.fws.gov/>

Refuge Vision:

"With the help of our conservation partners, at Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge we will apply sound, scientific principles and adaptive management strategies to sustain the long-term health and integrity of coastal Maine habitats; expand community outreach and environmental education and interpretive programs; and, stimulate visitors to embrace stewardship of natural resources.

We envision the future Refuge Complex epitomizing the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System; conserving in perpetuity an incredibly rich tapestry of coastal islands, intertidal estuaries, freshwater wetlands, maritime forests and open fields; and, enabling nesting and migrating seabirds, and other wildlife of conservation concern in the Gulf of Maine, to thrive here."

Refuge Updates

New Manager—Refuge Manager Charlie Blair transferred to Petit Manan in February 2004 filling the vacancy left by Stan Skutek's move to Canaan Valley NWR. Charlie was the former Refuge Manager at Sherburne NWR in Minnesota.

Name Change—as part of Petit Manan's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) we administratively changed the name of the refuge to **Maine Coastal Islands NWR** to better express our mission and scope. The change took effect in December.

Maine Coastal Islands NWR Significance to Seabirds in Maine:

- 96% of Arctic terns nest on refuge islands
- 61% of common terns nest on refuge islands
- 52% of laughing gulls nest on refuge islands
- 3 of 4 puffin colonies occur on refuge islands
- 4 of 6 razorbill colonies occur on refuge islands
- 46 islands important to seabirds, wading birds or bald eagles are now afforded protection as part of Maine Coastal Islands

Friends of Maine Seabird Islands



Friends of Maine Seabird Islands (FOMSI) is a seabird support group based at Maine Coastal Islands NWR Rockport office. In two short years the organization has grown from a volunteer board to the hiring of an Executive Director. With David Cadbury at the helm the group has made significant contributions to seabird restoration and outreach.

2004 Highlights:

- Contributed \$7,500 towards staffing interns on refuge islands
- Raised \$9,500 towards outreach for Universal Seabird Nesting Signs

- Explored opportunities with partners for an island stewardship and monitoring program
- Developed a website and brochure to raise awareness of seabirds, the refuge and FOMSI
- Conducted outreach through media, fairs, and publications

Contact Information:

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