



Protecting Sears Island's  
Environmental and  
Cultural Resources



## Friends of Sears Island Summer Newsletter 2017

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### What's New

We haven't let any grass grow under our feet in the past few months as our dedicated volunteers cleared trails of downed trees, branches, and encroaching weeds, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors to Sears Island.

FOSI is happy to report that we have extended the contract for our Outreach Coordinator, Ashley Megquier, and once again she has developed a program that offers something for everyone. Fall events are listed at the end of this newsletter.

We also contracted with Aleta McKeage of GreenWays Consulting to follow up on her work identifying and removing invasive species, monitoring sensitive sites, and finishing up a Stewardship Guide for the conservation area. Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District's Conservation Corps interns Jamie Behan and Sierra Hopkins assisted Aleta this summer in collecting data on plants growing in permanent plots, which are sampled every 5 years. Aleta also implemented a rigorous Citizen Scientist program for those who want the experience of a hands-on approach. More information about our citizen science initiative can be found on our website at [www.friendsofsearsisland.org/explore-the-island/](http://www.friendsofsearsisland.org/explore-the-island/), and you will find detailed information and instructions on the next page for participating in our iNaturalist project, an innovative database of the plants and animals that can be seen on Sears Island.



We continue to collaborate with other organizations and have joined the Maine Land Trust Network and the Maine Association of Nonprofits.

Education is an important part of our mission, and we continue our involvement with the Maine Ocean School, a magnet school based in Searsport slated to open in 2018. Unity College students conducted several research projects on the island, and FOSI hosted a nature exploration field trip for the Belfast Area Homeschool Group.

In addition, Searsport Area High School students worked with Brian Beal, professor at the University of Maine at Machias, to set up a clam research project on the island in May. The students are studying the predation rates on soft-shell clam juveniles at upper and lower tidal heights, and will return to the island this fall to check on their study plots.

You may have seen some new signs that have been installed in cooperation with the Maine DOT, including informational and directional signs and small ones prohibiting horses on trails. We would also like to thank Cloe Chunn for making new trail signs for us this spring!

We participated in Searsport Heritage Days by holding an archaeology walk on August 12, led by Paul Bock, an archaeologist and owner of Stoney Knoll Archaeological Supplies in Searsport. We were pleased that 35 people attended the walk!

Plans are in the works for a kayaking regatta in 2018. More information will be posted on our website as it develops.



## HELP US BUILD OUR DATABASE OF ISLAND BIODIVERSITY!

As you may have heard, FOSI started a citizen science initiative in 2016. We began a project to catalog species observations on Sears Island using a website and app called iNaturalist. When you visit the island, if you have a camera or a smartphone, you can easily report sightings of flora and fauna to help us build an online inventory of what lives on the island. This information serves as a valuable baseline of island biodiversity so that we can monitor changes over time. There are two ways to join our project and start reporting your observations.

➔ Go to <http://bit.ly/2wad5OD> for a tutorial on how to get started.



*The Belfast Area Homeschool Group visited the island for an education program in May.*





# FOSI Receives Grant from the Maine Community Foundation to Expand Programs

We recently received a \$1457 grant from the Maine Community Foundation to expand educational programs on the island. It was made from the Waldo County Fund and the Emily and William Muir Community Fund. This grant enabled FOSI to offer a summer workshop series for children ages 4-10 and their families, which included creating outdoor art, exploring animal habitats, caring for the environment, map making, and geocaching. In addition, FOSI is planning to host some winter workshops and begin adding at least one wellness program, like yoga or tai chi, per season to the events line-up. The 601-acre conservation area on the island is an ideal location for low-impact outdoor recreation, and FOSI hopes to encourage more people to visit the island for both education and exercise and to become involved in their programs.

With offices in Ellsworth and Portland, the Maine Community Foundation works with donors and other partners to improve the quality of life for all Maine people. To learn more about the foundation, visit [www.mainecef.org](http://www.mainecef.org)



*A group of children examining tadpoles during a vernal pool exploration along the Homestead Trail.*

## Recent Photos Taken on Sears Island





## Current Volunteer Opportunities with FOSI

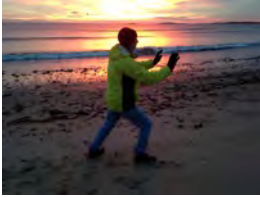
FOSI relies on active members and volunteers to fulfill its mission of stewardship. Getting involved with our organization is a fun and rewarding experience, and a great way to invest in your community! The following opportunities are currently available:

- **Coordinate special events:** Help us organize special events such as fundraising dinners, open houses, volunteer appreciation gatherings, and occasional on-island programs like a kayaking regatta.
- **Research grant opportunities and write proposals:** FOSI relies on grant funding to support a variety of projects and some operating expenses for the organization. We are looking for experienced grant writers to develop proposals and those interested in researching funding opportunities.
- **Lead programs:** FOSI offers a wide range of nature and wellness programs throughout the year. If you consider yourself knowledgeable about a specific topic, a naturalist, or are able to lead an outdoor recreation program, we are always looking for new leaders. Programs are typically 2 hours in length, and usually take place on the island in warmer months, with the option of an indoor workshop in the colder months.
- **Help maintain the trails or become an Adopt-a-Trail steward:** Trail maintenance involves trimming back weeds along trail sides, removing fallen branches, repairing steps and railings, and installing new signage. You can also adopt a specific trail to visit frequently and report anything that needs fixing to our trail crew.
- **Join our iNaturalist Citizen Science Project:** Contribute to our Sears Island biodiversity database by reporting species observations made during your visits to the island. All you need is a camera or a smartphone, and this can easily be done on your own, at your convenience!
- **Help manage invasive plants and monitor sensitive habitats:** Join Aleta McKeage on designated workdays during the warmer months to remove invasive plants, such as Japanese Barberry, Purple Loosestrife, and Oriental Bittersweet, or collect data at sensitive sites. This is part of our multi-year Sears Island Stewardship Project.

*If you are interested in getting involved but have a specific skill, interest, or area of expertise that doesn't fit with one of the activities listed above, please contact us at [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org) and we will work to find a good match for you!*



## Upcoming Fall Programs on Sears Island



**Tai Chi on the Beach with Dean Anderson**  
September 5<sup>th</sup>, 4-5pm



**Children's Monarch Butterfly Program with Serena Cole**  
September 12<sup>th</sup>, 4:15-5:30pm  
\*Registration required. Call 207-975-3878 to sign-up.



**Mushroom Walk with David Porter**  
September 13<sup>th</sup>, 10am-12pm



**Branch Weaving Workshop with Sandi Cirillo**  
October 1<sup>st</sup>, 9am-12pm  
\*Registration required. Call 207-975-3878 to sign-up.

## Thank You to Our Volunteers

FOSI would like to thank the following people for their recent volunteer efforts. We would also like to thank those who regularly volunteer:

- Jim Freeman, for building a picnic table that has been placed near the kiosk
- Pen Bay Steward alumni Jane Earley, Marge Stickler, Sarah Bennett, John Beal and Pat Gladding who completed a beach cleanup on the island in July and were able to remove larger debris with a boat
- Bella McMillen, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader from Saint Dominic Academy who picked up trash along Sears Island beaches as part of a school service project this spring
- Rob Burke, who weed-whacked island trails
- Unity College students, who spent a day installing the new trail signs made by Cloe Chunn
- Our spring and summer nature program leaders: Grace Bartlett, Cloe Chunn, Aleta McKeage, David Laing, Steve Byers, Gretchen Heilman Piper, Missy Hatch, and Paul Bock
- Our board of directors and advisory group members who work tirelessly to keep the organization running smoothly





## INTERESTED IN HELPING TO SHAPE OUR ORGANIZATION?

Our regular meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month in the Penobscot Marine Museum's library. Summer hours for meetings are from 3 to 4:30 pm, then we go back to winter hours of 1:30 to 3pm in November. All are welcome and we would love to see you there.

## Upcoming Fundraisers

We depend on our members to help us continue our programs—so please mark your calendars for these upcoming dine-to-donate fundraisers:

- **Ocean's Edge Restaurant**  
Wednesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 5-9pm  
10% of revenue from FOSI supporters will be given to support our conservation and education programs.
- **Angler's Restaurant**  
Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 4-8pm  
10% of all revenue will be donated to FOSI in support of our conservation and education programs.

## Thank you for your support of FOSI, we couldn't do it without you!



## WHY IS SEARS ISLAND SPECIAL TO YOU?

We're collecting comments about how people feel about the island. What do you love about this place? How do you spend time on the island? Or how has the work of FOSI had an impact on you? Anything else you'd like to share? Feel free to send us a Facebook message or email us at [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org) if you'd like to share- and we hope you will!

Thanks!

