

Friends of Sears Island

2025 Year in Review



Agenda

ANNUAL MEETING, SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026



- **Welcome & Introductions: Susan White, President**
- **Slate of Board & Officers: Janet Williams, Secretary**
- **Introduce Advisory Group Members: Janet Williams, Secretary**
- **2026 Budget: Jim Gilbert, Treasurer**
- **2025 Review & Looking Ahead- Highlights, Challenges & Goals:
Ashley Megquier, FOSI Outreach Coordinator**

Slate of Board & Officers

2026

- **President:** Rolf Olsen, Searsport
- **Vice President:** David Italiaander, Searsport
- **Secretary:** Janet Williams, Searsport
- **Treasurer:** Jim Gilbert, Winterport
- Greg Biddinger, Belfast
- Steve Bulloch, Searsport
- Rob Burke, Newburgh
- Sandi Cirillo, Searsport
- Jill Kulbe, Searsport
- Susan K. White, *Emerita*, Hampden



Advisory Group

2026

- Mayo Bulloch, Searsport
- Janine Carpenter, Searsport
- Cloe Chunn, Swanville
- Derek Dunbar, Searsport
- Josh Goldstein, Belfast
- Vanessa Haas, Searsport
- Stephene Kelley, Searsport
- Marjorie Knuuti, Searsport
- Bill Kulbe, Searsport
- Tom Mullin, Richmond
- Sunny Swanson, Searsport



The Year in Review

In 2025, FOSI...

- Had a very productive year
- Focused on improving visitor experience on the island, which involved creating a new trail, extending bog bridging, and a new kiosk with enlarged map and attached shed for storing tools
- Forged new working relationships with community partners
- Participated in three community fairs, held three fundraisers and installed six StoryWalks® and other interpretive walks on the Homestead Trail, in addition to offering educational, wellness, and recreational programs
- Increased the number of individual and business donors, and our fall campaign exceeded last year's total



Educational Programs

- FOSI had a banner year, offering many different types of programs for children and adults
- Some activities took place on Sears Island, and others were cosponsored with community partners at various locations in the area
- From making illuminated lanterns for the winter solstice celebration to learning about the varied ecological zones of the island, participants had the opportunity to find out more about Sears Island and what makes the island special.
- Each year, with financial support from many community businesses and individuals we develop programs that attract attendees and inspire them to expand their understanding of the natural world.



Children's Programs



**In-Person
Science Squad Events**



Activity Kits



**StoryWalks &
Self-Guided Activities**

Science Squad

- We offered three events geared specifically for children in 2025
- Our Springtime Island Exploration & Forest Tea Party was unfortunately canceled
- In the fall, we brought back Trails and Treats, which involves completing a Halloween nature scavenger hunt and Spooky Animal Interpretive Trail on Sears Island, then picking up a treat bag at Carver Library
- In December, we held a lantern making workshop at Carver Library to teach children about the winter solstice and invite families to attend our Solstice by the Sea celebration

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

Springtime Island Exploration & Forest Tea Party

A Science Squad Family Program with Ashley Megquier, Friends of Sears Island Outreach Coordinator

May 19, 4pm-5:30pm
on Sears Island



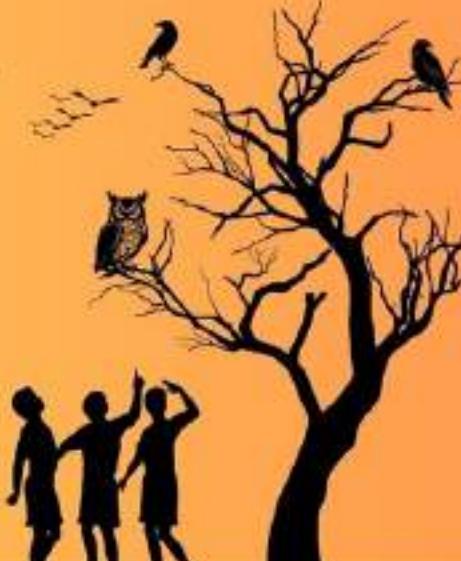
Look for signs of spring, take a sensory hike, and enjoy a forest tea party and story!

TO SIGN-UP, EMAIL OUTREACH@FRIENDSOSEARSISLAND.ORG
For ages 5-12 with an accompanying adult. Space is limited, pre-registration required.

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS

TRAILS AND TREATS

OCTOBER 15-31



A self-guided Halloween nature scavenger hunt and "spooky" animal trail on Sears Island. Pick up a treat bag at the library afterwards!

A printed scavenger hunt will be available to families visiting the island at the kiosk just beyond the island gate. Try to find all of the items on the list! The display signs along the Homestead Trail will also have interesting facts and jokes about the "spooky" animals associated with Halloween. After completing the scavenger hunt, families are invited to stop by the Carver Library before the end of the month for a free treat bag (non-food goodies).

FMI: FRIENDSOSEARSISLAND.ORG

Please be advised that hunting is allowed on Sears Island from Oct. 1- Dec. 31, with the exception of Sundays. Extra scavenger hunts will be available at the Carver Library desk for those who want to participate but don't want to visit the island during this time.



FOSI & CARVER LIBRARY PRESENT

WINTER SOLSTICE LANTERN MAKING WORKSHOP

DECEMBER 4, 3:30PM-5:00PM
AT CARVER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Learn about the winter solstice through stories and make a beautiful lantern to light your way on the longest night of the year! For ages 5-12. Email outreach@friendsosearsiand.org to register.

Science Squad

HALLOWEEN NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

FIND AS MANY ITEMS AS YOU CAN AND THEN TAKE YOUR SCAVENGER HUNT TO CARVER MEMORIAL LIBRARY FOR A TREAT BAG!

SPIDER STORM CLOUDS CROW THORNY BUSHES

MUSHROOM SOMETHING STINKY SPIDER WEB OLD BONES

WILD ANIMAL TRACKS SPOOKY TREE SOMETHING SLIMY SKULL SHAPED ROCK

MURKY WATER DEAD BUG MAGIC SEEDS WAND STICK

FRIENDSOFSEASISLAND.ORG



Activity Kits

- In each season, we offered 40 activity kits to local families, which totaled 160 for the year
- Kit themes included *Science Magic, Earth Explorers, Bubble Blast, and Camouflage & Biomimicry*
- Carver Memorial Library continues to be a key collaborator in this program, serving as our pickup location. They report this often brings new patrons to the library- a win-win!

Friends of Sears Island Presents

Science Magic!

Winter Activity Kit for Kids

Our winter activity kit will include materials for kids to conduct several exciting science experiments at home! Erupt a miniature volcano, create your own bouncy ball, write with invisible ink, and make spiders dance! Instructions for these activities plus others you can easily try at home with common household materials will be included.

For ages 5-12. Activity kits can be picked up at Carver Memorial Library February 10 - 21.

To register, email outreach@friendssearsiand.org



Friends of Sears Island Presents

Earth Explorers

Spring Activity Kit for Kids

In honor of Earth Day, let's get outside and connect with nature in meaningful ways! You'll receive a drawstring backpack for outdoor exploration containing a nature journal, a miniature watercolor set, and collection vials. Also included: ideas for decorating and filling the nature backpack, plus handouts detailing a variety of outdoor sensory games and mindful activities to try this spring.

For ages 5-12. Activity kits can be picked up at Carver Memorial Library April 15 - 30.

To register, email outreach@friendssearsiand.org



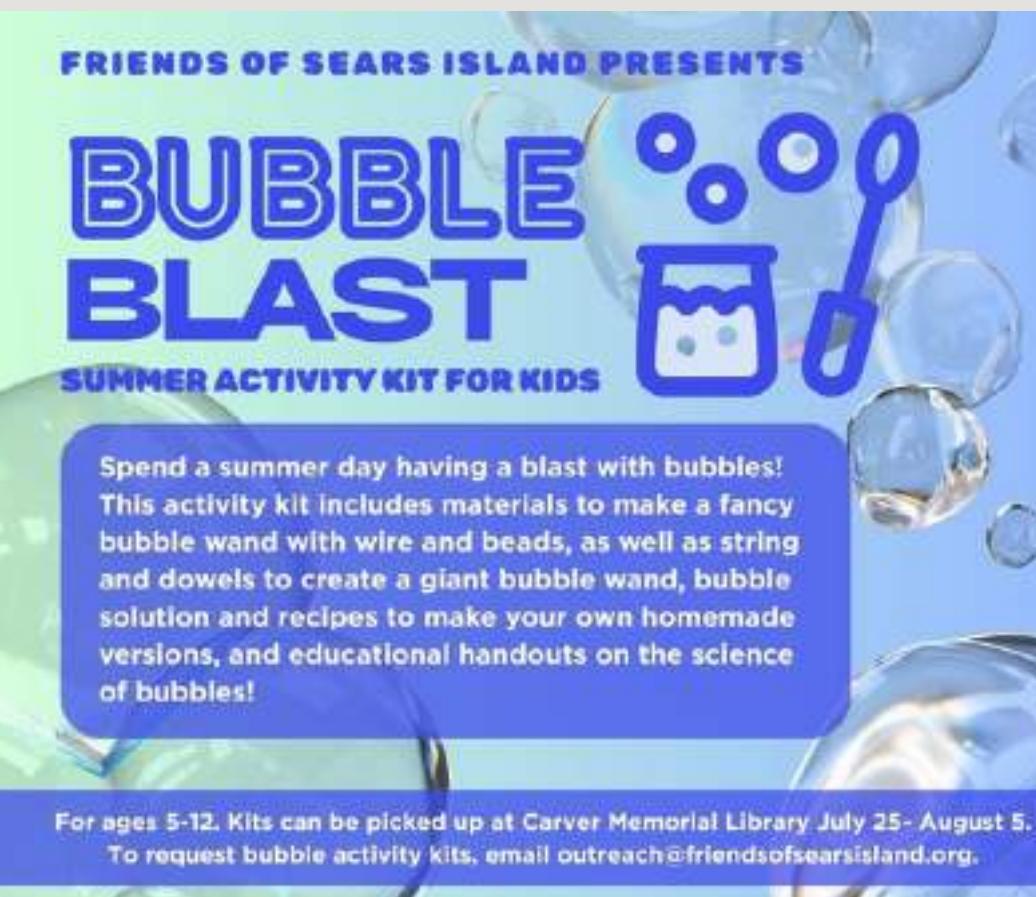
FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS

BUBBLE BLAST

SUMMER ACTIVITY KIT FOR KIDS

Spend a summer day having a blast with bubbles! This activity kit includes materials to make a fancy bubble wand with wire and beads, as well as string and dowels to create a giant bubble wand, bubble solution and recipes to make your own homemade versions, and educational handouts on the science of bubbles!

For ages 5-12. Kits can be picked up at Carver Memorial Library July 25- August 5. To request bubble activity kits, email outreach@friendssearsiand.org.



Friends of Sears Island Presents

Camouflage & Biomimicry

Fall Activity Kits for Kids

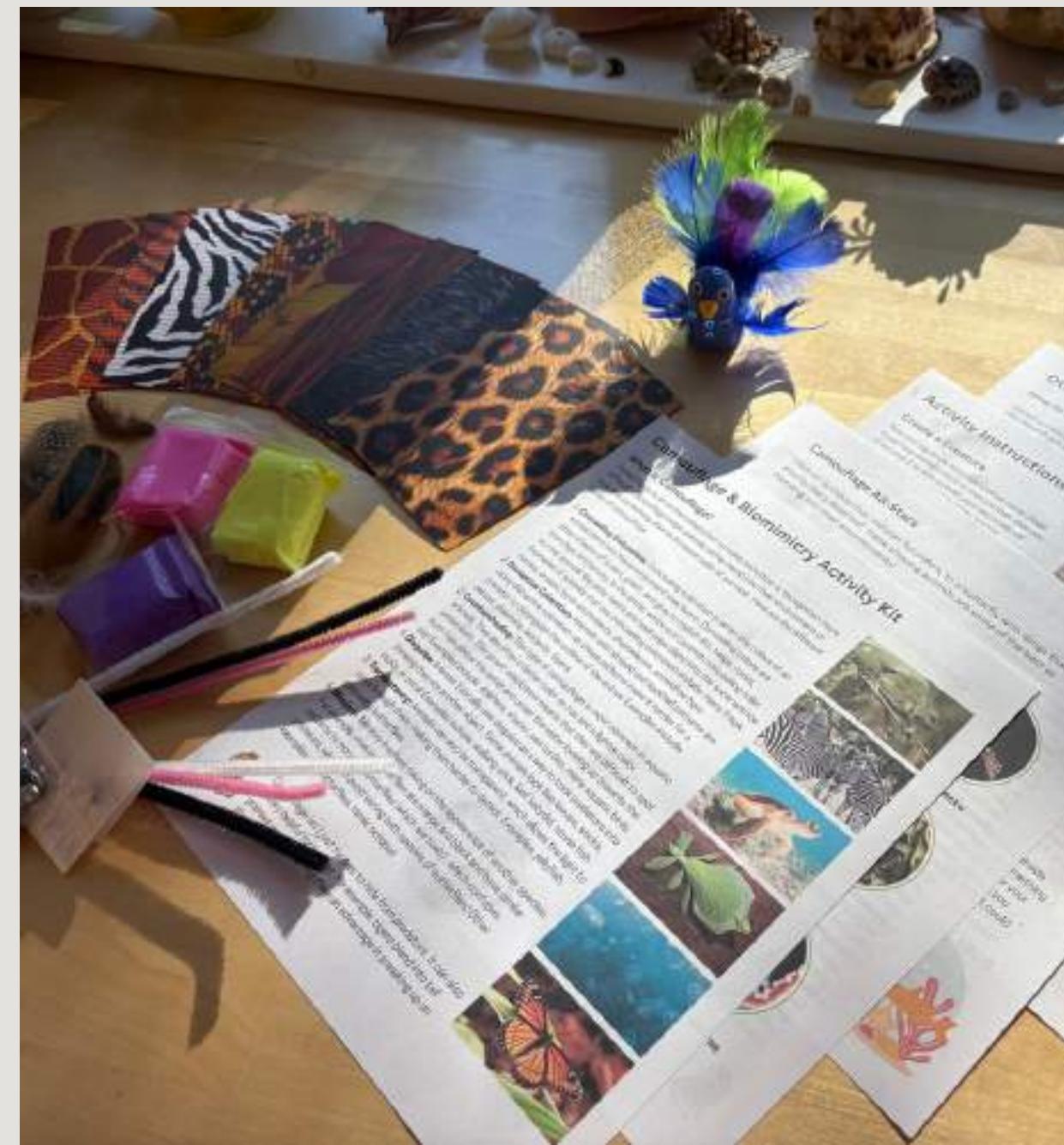
Learn all about camouflage and mimicry- fascinating adaptations that different animals use to blend into their environment or imitate other species. This kit includes air dry clay, googly eyes, feathers, and other materials for your child to create their own patterned creature, and prompts for building it a suitable environment or shelter. Educational handouts and activity sheets are also included.

For ages 5-12. Activity kits can be picked up at Carver Memorial Library October 1-10.

To register, email outreach@friendssearsiand.org



Activity Kits



Science Magic Winter Activity Kit Instructions

Erupt a Volcano



What you'll need:

1. Volcano mold included in your activity kit
2. Baking soda
3. Vinegar
4. Food coloring (optional)
5. Measuring spoons

How to erupt your volcano:

1. Set your mini plastic volcano on a cookie sheet, or some other surface that you don't mind getting messy.
2. Place as much baking soda as you can fit on the top of plastic volcano. The volcano is small, so you'll probably only be able to put 1/8 or 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda on the volcano. Add a drop or two of red or orange food coloring if you'd like to make it look like lava!
3. Pour a teaspoon or so of vinegar onto the volcano, and watch what happens next! It should bubble and fizz and run down the volcano, much like a real eruption!

*You can also build a volcano out of snow with a deeper well in the center, and experiment with larger quantities of baking soda, vinegar, and food coloring to make an eruption outdoors!

How does this work?

The baking soda is a base and the vinegar is acidic, and when they mix, a chemical reaction occurs making water and carbon dioxide, which fizzes as it is released as a gas.

Make a Bouncy Ball



What you'll need:

1. The bouncy ball kit in your activity bag
2. A cup of water

How to make your bouncy ball:

1. Pour the packets of colored crystals into the plastic bouncy ball mold, layering colors if you'd like until the crystals reach the opening of the mold.
2. Dip the mold into the cup of water for 2 minutes.
3. Remove from the cup of water and set the mold on the counter to dry for at least 15 minutes.
4. When the mold feels dry and it seems like the bouncy ball has set up, carefully remove the mold. When you first take the ball out of the mold, it will be sticky- let it sit for another 10-15 minutes and then it should be ready to bounce!

How does this work?

When a substance in the crystals comes into contact with water it causes a chemical reaction that makes the crystal powder link its polymer chains together. This creates a bouncy, flexible material. These chains make it possible for the ball to bounce back when it hits a hard surface.

Write with Invisible Ink



What you'll need:

1. Invisible ink pen included in your activity kit
2. Paper
3. Lemons (optional)
4. Baking soda (optional)
5. Rubbing Alcohol (optional)
6. Turmeric powder (optional)
7. Small paintbrush or cotton swabs (optional)

Three ways to write with invisible ink:

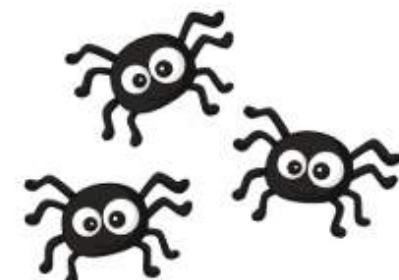
1. Write a message on a piece of white paper with your invisible ink pen. Once dry, shine the special blue light on the other end of the pen to read the secret message!
2. You can also make your own homemade invisible ink with lemon juice. Simply squeeze the juice of a lemon into a dish and use a small paintbrush or cotton swabs to write a secret message on your paper. Let it dry, and then hold the paper over a candle or incandescent light bulb to read it. You can also have an adult iron the paper for you for about 15-30 seconds which should make the message appear.
3. Another way to make invisible ink is by mixing 1/2 cup of water with 1 Tablespoon of baking soda in a glass. Stir until the baking soda has dissolved and then paint your message onto the paper with this solution. Let the paper dry fully and place it on several layers of newspaper. Then create a reagent to reveal the secret invisible message by mixing 1/2 cup of rubbing alcohol with 1 teaspoon of turmeric in a separate glass. Stir well and then paint the reagent mixture onto the white paper with to reveal the hidden message or drawing!

How does this work?

- **Invisible ink pen:** Pens like the one included in your kit usually contain a special ink that can only be seen with ultraviolet light, or a blacklight. The ink has a fluorescent compound in it that only ultraviolet light exposes, which is why you can't see your message clearly until the special light is shining on it.
- **Lemon juice method:** Lemon juice contains sugars, acids, and water. Typically, lemon juice is mostly clear, so when you paint it onto paper, you can't really see it once dry. When you heat up lemon juice, it causes some of its sugars to react with oxygen in the air (oxidation), which turns these sugars brown. Acids in the lemon juice can also react with fibers in the paper to make more sugars, which again turn brown in the heat.
- **Baking soda / water/ rubbing alcohol/ turmeric method:** The turmeric acts as a pH indicator, and there is an ingredient in turmeric that changes the color of the baking soda when it comes into contact with it!

Which of these methods do you like best?

Make Spiders Dance



What you'll need:

1. Dry erase marker included in your activity kit
2. A piece of tinfoil wrapped over the inside of a cookie sheet, or a non-porous flat plate or casserole dish
3. A permanent marker (optional)
4. A cup of water
5. Toothpicks or a straw

How to make spiders dance:

1. If you have a permanent marker at home, flatten a piece of tinfoil out in a cookie sheet and draw a spider web on the tinfoil with permanent marker and allow to dry completely. If you are not using tinfoil, and plan to draw on a ceramic plate or casserole dish, skip this step.
2. Use the black dry erase marker included in your kit to draw some spiders on the tinfoil web, or if using a plate, draw them onto your plate. Keep your shapes simple- that will work better than an intricate design. Let the spider drawing dry fully.
3. Slowly pour water onto your tinfoil or plate, but not directly onto the spiders- let the water eventually spread to the spiders on its own. Wait for a little bit and then try to lift the spiders away from the tinfoil or plate very gently with a straw or toothpick. They will appear to be "dancing" around the web! If you have trouble with the tinfoil method you can skip drawing the web with permanent marker on tinfoil and just try drawing the spiders with dry erase marker on a non-porous plate. Make sure whatever surface you draw on is flat. You can try drawing all kinds of other things too- make birds fly out of a tree or fish swim in the ocean!

How does this work?

Water can form a thin flexible layer on surfaces- this is called surface tension. By pouring water on the tinfoil or the plate, the water creates a layer of surface tension between the flat surface and the spider drawings, which lifts the spiders off of the surface and allows them to slide around.

More Science Magic to Try at Home!



Oobleck

Oobleck is amazing because it behaves like both a solid and a liquid! Just mix 1 cup of water with 1 1/2-2 cups of cornstarch and you'll have your own oobleck to play with!

Bouncy Eggs

Put a raw egg (still in the shell) in a cup and cover it with vinegar. Let it sit for 1-2 days and then gently rub away any remaining eggshell. You should be able to drop the egg and watch it bounce! You can add food coloring to the vinegar if you'd like the egg to be colorful and look like it is glowing.

Frozen bubbles

If you have any bubble solution at home, try blowing a bubble outside on a really cold day (days in the single digits or low teens are best for this). Very quickly, the bubble will freeze, covered in beautiful frosty patterns!



Earth Explorers Spring Activity Kit Instructions

Welcome spring and happy Earth Day! As the days get longer and warmer, it is the perfect time to get outside and reconnect with nature after the long winter- and notice all the changes taking place. There is so much going on: budding plants, the return of migratory birds and the building of nests, baby animals being born, changing weather...the list goes on and on. Our planet is a marvelous place full of wonder and inspiration, and the best way to find it is to grab your things and get outside to explore, play, create, observe, and connect to yourself and the wider world through mindfulness. What is mindfulness? Mostly it is paying attention, noticing how you are feeling, and what is happening around you. We hope that you enjoy decorating and filling your nature exploration backpack, and that it accompanies you on many meaningful adventures!

What Should I Put in my Nature Exploration Backpack?

You backpack contains a small watercolor set, a nature journal, and some glass vials for collecting interesting items, making potions, or conducting experiments. What else might an earth explorer consider keeping inside of their exploration backpack, to be ready at a moment's notice to have extra fun in nature? Here are some ideas, but you've probably got a lot of your own too:

- A magnifying glass or magnifier boxes to observe small things and creatures up close
- Binoculars to see birds and other faraway sights
- A pencil and/or colored pencils, and a pencil sharpener for writing and sketching in your nature journal
- A tiny cup to hold water for your watercolor paints (a plastic medicine dosing cup works great for this)
- A small ruler for measuring things like the size of an animal track- measurements can be helpful when trying to identify something
- A field guide (could be a general guide to plants and animals found in our region, or specific to your interests- for example, mushrooms, or butterflies)
- Camera
- Ziploc bags or reusable containers for holding your finds-the glass vials in your kit are also very useful for collecting items of interest!
- Bug house
- Small net for catching creatures in a field or pond
- Compass
- First aid supplies, in the event of bumps and scrapes
- Snacks and water
- DIY cardboard flower press



Nature Activity Cards

You can cut up the cards on the other printed page included in this kit and make a deck of mindful nature activities. You could tuck them into your nature journal or staple them together to make a little booklet that you keep in your pack. Try them out when you are playing outside. Can you think of other activities that you like to do? Maybe you can design some more activity cards of your own!

Ideas for Decorating your Nature Exploration Backpack



Your nature exploration backpack is a blank canvas. You can leave it just how it is, or you can personalize it by decorating it! Need some inspiration? You could try one of these methods:

Plant Pigment Print

Find some colorful flowers or fern fronds and get a hammer and some paper towels. Before trying to make a pigment print on your backpack, try a test on a similar scrap piece of fabric, or a piece of white paper. Place the fabric or paper on a flat surface that you can pound on, then place the plant material on top of that, and finally put the paper towel on top. Use a hammer to pound on top of the paper towel all of the area that the plants are covering. As you do this, the pigments in the leaves and petals of the plants should transfer to the paper or fabric below. Sometimes the color of pigments that come out is surprising. This is a very fun activity but have an adult help you with the hammering. Once you have figured out the technique and which plants make the best prints, you can take a piece of cardboard and place it inside the backpack, between the front and back. Then you can make a pounded plant pigment print onto the backpack without it bleeding through to the backside.

Painted Plant Prints

Press some leaves or flowers and then paint a thin coat of acrylic paint on the pressed plants, ideally on whichever side has more veins and ridges. Arrange the plant pieces painted side up on a table. Then put a piece of cardboard between the layers of your pack and pulling the fabric tight, press the fabric of the backpack face down onto the painted plants, making sure the whole surface makes contact with the plant material. When you pull the backpack up, you'll find your painted plant print!

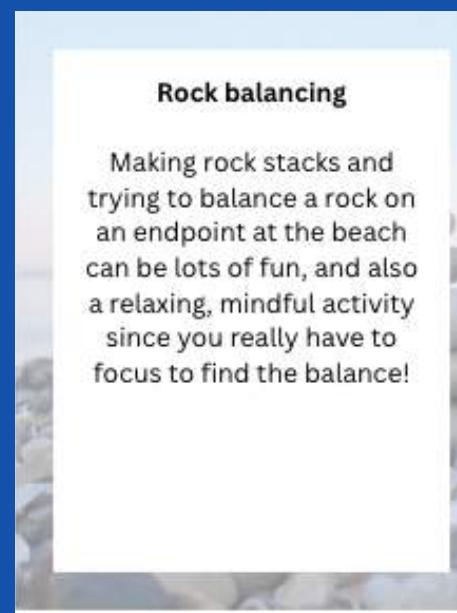
Block Prints

You can also draw a design into a flat styrofoam tray, pressing down hard with a pencil or pen. Roll a thin layer of acrylic paint onto the design drawn onto the tray, and then press the front of your backpack down onto it (with cardboard insert inside to prevent the paint going through both layers). Pull back gently to see how your design transfers!

Other Ideas

You can also paint or draw on your backpack with craft paints or fabric markers. If you are looking for more of a project and have an adult help you, there's always tie dying!





Rock balancing

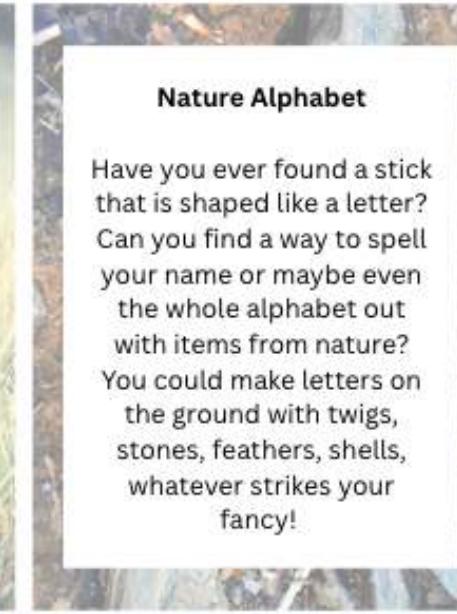
Making rock stacks and trying to balance a rock on an endpoint at the beach can be lots of fun, and also a relaxing, mindful activity since you really have to focus to find the balance!

Making Nature Mandalas

Make a natural sculpture using twigs, petals, stones, leaves, whatever you can find. Build a circular pattern, from the center out. These are not only fun to make, but a joy for others to find on the beach or along a trail! You can always take a photo of your mandala or sketch it so that you can remember your creation.

Skipping Stones

Find flat rocks along a body of water and try to get your rock to skim across the surface of the water. How many times can you get your stones to skip?



Cloud Watching

Pausing to gaze up at the sky and watch the clouds moving and morphing is a fun activity, and you can always use your imagination to see what shapes you see in the clouds.

Grass Whistles

A good trick to learn is how to use a wide blade of grass as a whistle. Hold the blade of grass tightly between the sides of your thumbs. There should be a little opening between the part of your thumb with the nail and the base of your thumbs. Blow into that space and experiment until you get a loud kazoo-like whistle sound.

Nature Alphabet

Have you ever found a stick that is shaped like a letter? Can you find a way to spell your name or maybe even the whole alphabet out with items from nature? You could make letters on the ground with twigs, stones, feathers, shells, whatever strikes your fancy!



Choose a Spot for All Seasons

It can be really rewarding to pick a place outdoors that you want to return to in all seasons. Spend some time getting to know your spot--this could be just sitting and observing what goes on there, sketching it, reading or writing there. How does it change throughout the year?

Meet a Tree

This is a fun activity with a partner. One person is blindfolded and the other leads them to a nearby tree. The blindfolded person takes a few minutes to feel the bark of the tree, the width of the trunk, and whether it has leaves or needles. Once you've gotten to know your tree, your partner can lead you away. When the blindfold is off, see if you can find your tree.

Forest Tea Party

Have an adult help you collect some wintergreen leaves and spruce needles and bring them back inside to steep in a pot of water to make a forest tea. Once the tea is ready, take it in a thermos outside along with some cups. Spread out a blanket and enjoy a tea party in the forest, made by the forest!

Bubble Blast Activity Kit Instructions

Create a Fancy Bubble Wand

1. Find the coil of thicker gold-colored wire in your kit. You can easily bend it into fun shapes like a heart, a star, or make lots of loops, almost like a flower with petals. Once you've created a shape you like, have an adult help you cut off the extra wire, but be sure to leave an inch or two below your shape that you can join to the handle of your wand.

2. Take one of the shorter 6" wooden dowels included in your kit (there are two different thicknesses to play with), and line it up with the wire top you made for your wand. You can then use some of the thinner gold wire to join these two pieces together by wrapping. As you wrap, try adding some beads for decoration!

3. There should be enough wire in your kit and 4 shorter dowels, so that you can make at least a couple of fancy bubble wands. Have fun experimenting, and try to determine if certain shapes work better than others for making bubbles!

***** Please note: the small packet of concentrated bubble solution in your kit is only meant to get you started and will probably work better for these small wands. It also tends to make better bubbles after sitting for a while. For best results, try the recipes on the next page!***



Make a Giant Bubble Wand

1. For this project, you'll need the two 12" long wooden dowels in your activity bag, and the white string.

2. Next you are going to cut your string into two pieces, but one should be shorter than the other. The exact length doesn't matter, but you want the second string to be about twice as long as the first string. For example, if you cut one piece of string to be 1.5 feet long, the second string should be roughly 3 feet long. Keep in mind that smaller children will have an easier time using the wand if the strings aren't super long, whereas older kids that are taller will be able to work with longer pieces of string.

3. Tie the end of the short string to the top of one dowel and then tie the other end to the top of the other dowel. Next take the longer string and tie each end to each dowel, below the first shorter string. If you have tiny eyelet screws at home you can carefully screw these into the top of each dowel and tie your strings to these, so that they don't slide up and down the dowel. You could also use hot glue or a thumbtack on each dowel to help secure your knots in place.

4. Now you are ready to dip the strings of your giant bubble wand in bubble solution. Once thoroughly saturated, slowly pull the two dowels apart so that the shorter string is taut. The longer string should droop below as you gently pass the open wand through the air. It can take some practice, but you'll get some giant bubbles in no time!

The "Bubble Solution with Glycerin or Corn Syrup" on the next page works especially well. If you are still having trouble, you can slide a small metal washer onto the longer lower string to help weigh the lower wand string down, which will keep the strings from getting as tangled. You could also experiment with using thicker cotton string.



Bubble Recipes

Basic Bubble Solution

Ingredients

- 4 cups warm water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup blue Dawn dish soap- for some reason, the "blue stuff" works best for bubbles!

Instructions

1. Combine the sugar and water in a bowl.
2. Whisk the sugar into the warm water until the sugar dissolves.
3. Add the dish soap and gently whisk to combine. Try to make as few bubbles as possible when whisking.
4. Let the mixture sit for at least two hours (or as long as overnight).

Bubble Solution with Glycerin or Corn Syrup

Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 1 cup dish soap (Dawn or Joy brands tend to work well)
- 1/3 cup glycerin OR 1/2 cup corn syrup OR honey (the helps the bubbles last longer)

Instructions

1. Gently combine the ingredients in a large container.
2. Stir slowly to avoid creating too much foam.
3. Let the mixture sit for at least an hour or ideally overnight for best results.



The Science of Bubbles

What are bubbles?

A soap bubble is air trapped inside a ball of soap and water. Soap molecules are flexible, and water molecules are stretchy, and when you blow into this solution, the air is captured inside which forms a bubble.



Why do bubbles pop?

Aside from popping when coming into contact with a sharp object, bubbles pop on their own when the water starts to evaporate between the soap layers of the bubble. This weakens and breaks the surface tension, which allows the air inside to be released.



Why are bubbles round?

When you blow air into bubble solution, this creates something called surface tension on the otherwise flat solution. Surface tension is a force that causes liquids to stretch, and because a sphere is geometrically the strongest and most efficient shape, the bubble solution stretches into this round shape, creating a bubble.



What was the largest bubble ever made?

The world record for the biggest free-floating bubble made by a human had a volume of 3,399.7 cubic feet, made by Gary Pearlman in Cleveland, Ohio in 2015. He created the bubble using two fishing poles tied together with string!

What makes bubbles colorful?

Bubbles are iridescent, or appear to have a shimmering rainbow color because of how light bounces off of their thin film walls. Some colors are absorbed through the wall and others are reflected off, which creates those beautiful changing colors.

StoryWalks





On-Island Programs

- It is always wonderful when the weather cooperates and we can host educational programs on the island. Most of our in-person offerings this year were cosponsored with other community groups.
- However, we did offer a “Life in the Intertidal Zone” walk with Sarah O’Malley of Maine Maritime Academy in July and enjoyed a fall foliage walk along the Homestead Trail led by Sky Milstein from Belfast Parks and Recreation in September.



On-Island Programs



On-Island Programs



Self-Guided Activities

- In addition to using the Homestead Trail display boards for StoryWalks®, we created and installed a “Tracking Mammal Activity in Winter Interpretive Walk” featuring photos and information from naturalist Sandra Mitchell.

Tracking Mammal Activity in Winter

Interpretive Nature Walk

Created by Friends of Sears Island with information and photos from naturalist and nature photographer Sandra Mitchell

»»» MARCH 15-31

»»» Self-guided, along the Homestead Trail on Sears Island



Self-Guided Activities

- We also hosted our first-ever “Sears Island Art + Poetry Walk,” which featured work submitted by local artists and poets that was exhibited on the display boards for island visitors to enjoy. We are exploring other ideas to maximize the use of these panels year-round.

Sears Island Art + Poetry Walk

ON VIEW AUGUST 18 - SEPTEMBER 7
ALONG THE HOMESTEAD TRAIL





Sandi Cirillo
Textures, Textures Everywhere
Fiber art

"Textures, Textures Everywhere" is a depiction of an underwater scene with corals moving in the water. My name is Sandi Cirillo, and I am a fiber artist who enjoys working with the many manmade and natural materials in our environment. I also create awareness of the fragility of our environment in my art and the idea of being good stewards to the land we have around us. Conservation is the key to sustaining our environment."



Friends of Sears Island

dedicated volunteers, with
Materials generously donated by Viking Lumber.

VIKING
LUMBER & BUILDING SUPPLY

Zoom Presentations

- **Although the frequency of offering Zoom presentations to the public has decreased, we did offer one program online in November. Jula Moll-Rocek of the Harvard College Farlow Herbarium gave a talk and slideshow presentation about their research on Sears Island fungal populations, which was well attended.**



Health & Wellness Programs



- We didn't offer as many programs geared specifically towards health and wellness in 2025, but we did host a very successful beach yoga class with Garrett Vail in August. This class is always an adventure in being at one with nature— practicing patience with the shifting sand, hot sun, and insects— but it is always worth the reward of gazing out at beautiful vistas and listening to the birds and waves lapping the shore!

Community Collaborations

- We are proud of the connections and working relationships we have built in the community over the years, which continue to deepen as we work with other groups in creative ways! 2025 proved this, as most of our events were offered in collaboration with one or more local organizations.



Community Collaborations



During the spring and summer, we:

- Promoted and cosponsored an Earth Day hike on Sears Island with the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition
- Hosted a popular Marine Mammal Stranding Response Training with Allied Whale and Carver Memorial Library
- Cosponsored a vernal pool walk led by Aram Calhoun of the University of Maine with Waldo County Climate Action Coalition, Alliance for Sears Island, and Upstream Watch
- Promoted a Sierra Club Maine Earth Day hike on Sears Island
- Co-hosted a Wednesday Waldo Hike on Sears Island with Coastal Mountains Land Trust, led by Bindy Pendleton



Marine Mammal Stranding Response Workshop

with Rosie Seton &
Carissa Bielamowicz Miller



April 19, 10am-1pm
at Carver Memorial Library in Searsport



Learn how to respond when we find marine mammals in distress

TO REGISTER, EMAIL OUTREACH@FRIENDSOFSEARISLAND.ORG

Sponsored by Allied Whale at College of the Atlantic, Friends of Sears Island & Carver Memorial Library



Coastal Mountains Land Trust
and Friends of Sears Island Present

WEDNESDAY WALDO WALK ON SEARS ISLAND

June 11, 9:30am
with Bindy Pendleton
& FOSI Board Members

Explore a variety of intriguing
and unique trail systems and
learn more about Friends of
Sears Island's work! This hike
will include an option of
distances between 1 – 4 miles
including forested trails,
shoreline and the island's
road.

Please register at
info@coastalmountains.org.
If you are interested in a ride
share, be in touch with Bindy
at @ 207-323-0817.



Sears Island Vernal Pools

MAY 13, 9AM-12PM

with Aram Colhour,
University of Maine emeritus professor of wetland ecology and conservation
Sponsored by Alliance for Sears Island, Friends of Sears Island, & Upstream Watch

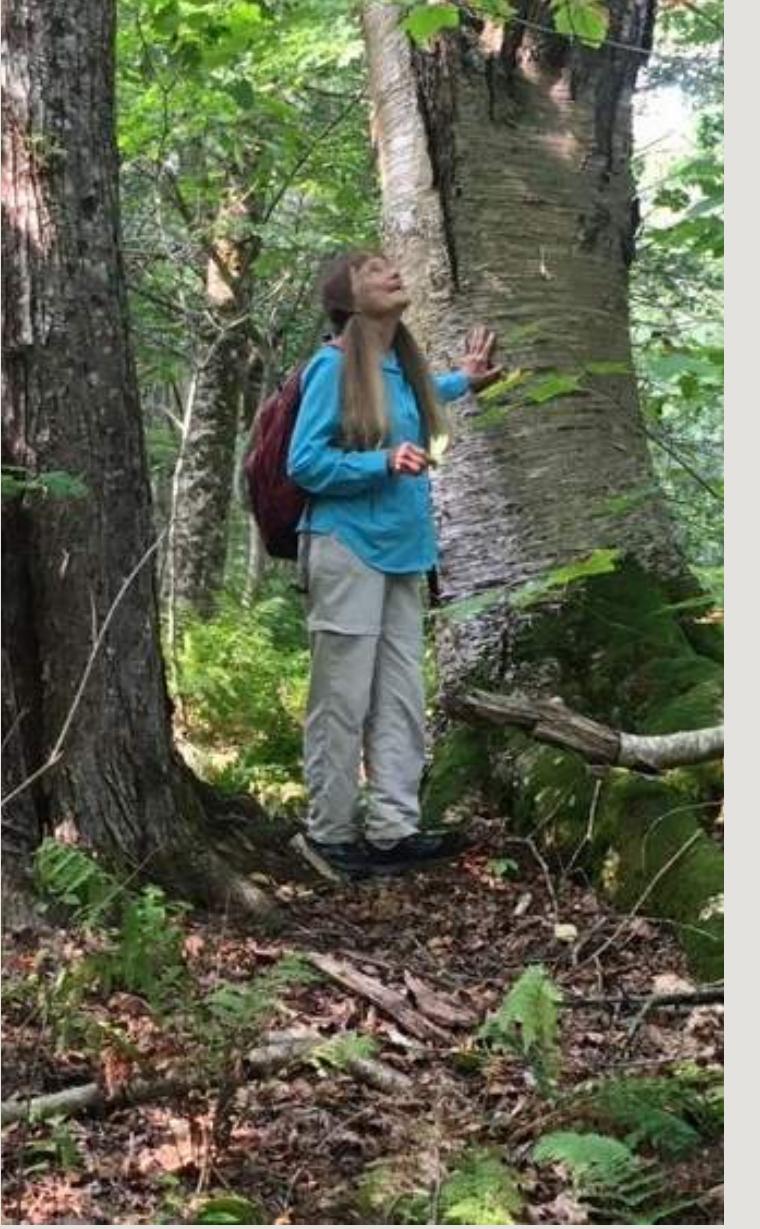


Community Collaborations



In the fall, we:

- Participated in the Penobscot Marine Museum's SardineFest, where we offered a sardine can diorama craft activity
- Had a table at BBWC's Climate Resilience Fair in Belfast, and at the Common Ground Country Fair where we were able to talk to a large number of people about the island and our mission
- Saw the Intersecting Ecologies Retreat come to fruition—a project we had been helping to plan for over a year. This was a two-day event, organized by the University of Southern Maine North Atlantic Institute, in collaboration with the Parsonage Gallery, the Penobscot Marine Museum, and FOSI that involved an art exhibition and opening, several presentations about Sears Island and guided island explorations that we provided, and a group collage-making workshop.



SATURDAY OCTOBER 4, 2025
STEAMBOAT LANDING
BELFAST, MAINE
10AM-3PM
FREE

Waldo County Climate Action Coalition's

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FAIR

30+ Exhibitors providing solutions for a sustainable community

SOLAR PANELS
HEAT PUMPS
BUILDING SOLUTIONS
ELECTRIC BIKES & CARS

COMPOSTING
CONSERVATION
FOOD SECURITY
FARMING & GARDENING

Family Activities, Music & Food Trucks
Rain date Sunday October 5th

Fair Sponsors: Green Store, WORTH, SUNDOG SOLAR, Senior College, Waldo County Climate Action Coalition

Scan for more information

A collage of images from the Climate Resilience Fair, including a map of the area, various exhibitor booths, and people interacting with displays.

Intersecting Ecologies

5 Sept
8 Elm St, Searsport, ME
5pm Friday
Opening reception
All welcome

The Parsonage

Two small images of Paula Gerstenblatt and Jan Piribek's artwork.

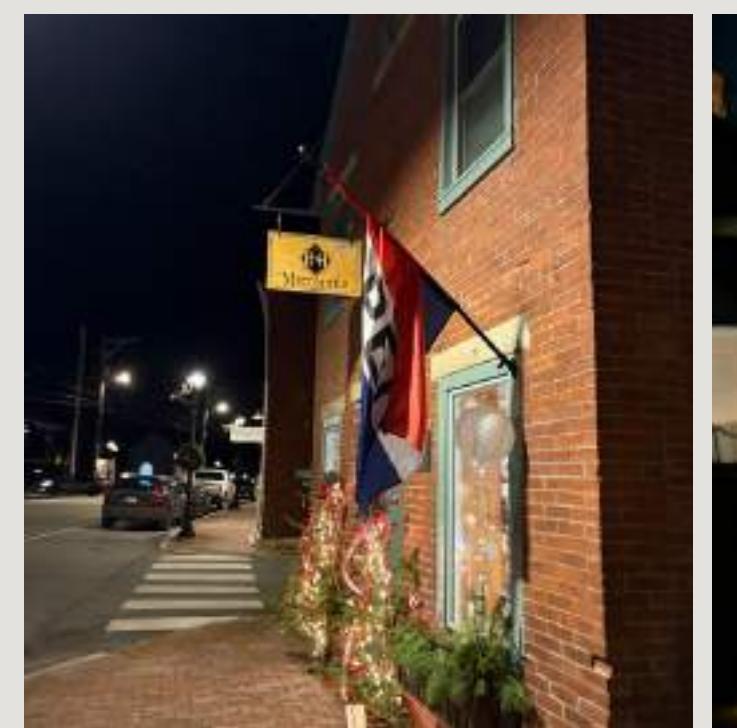
Community Collaborations



- The winter solstice celebration on December 21 was a fitting culmination of a year packed with partnerships
- We worked with many local businesses and organizations to bring Solstice by the Sea to downtown Searsport, including the Splendiferous Sweet Shoppe, H & H Mercantile, Trove, Hey Sailor! Maineport Brewing Company, Moose's Smokehouse, the Parsonage Gallery, the Penobscot Marine Museum, Carver Memorial Library, and the Searsport Congregational Methodist Food Pantry
- As we reflect on 2025, it is apparent that FOSI has created goodwill in our community and taken part in dynamic, meaningful programming that was made stronger through collaboration

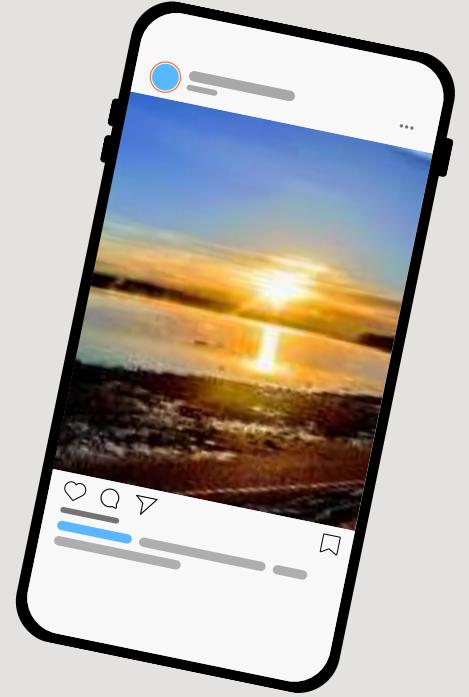








Website, Social Media, & Technology



Staying well connected with our active local and regional friends is always a priority, and a challenge for a small, volunteer-led nonprofit organization. But it's been another year of solid growth in our digital channels:

- Our Facebook audience grew by nearly 9% to 2,170 followers.
- Although our Instagram audience is smaller, it grew by nearly 27% to 846 followers.
- Subscribers to our email messages increased by 5% to 770, and almost 50% of our loyal friends open our messages, an impressive “open rate” for an organization like ours.
- We have 330 Google reviews with an average rating of 4.7 stars, and many people continue to post pictures from their visit to Sears Island on our Google page.

Offshore Wind Port Update



- The threat of a port to manufacture floating offshore wind turbines on Sears Island is on hold for many reasons. The current federal administration is opposed to wind energy and has created an environment in which any investment in port infrastructure is extremely unlikely. With no current prospects for offshore wind, we've been told by Maine Department of Transportation project leaders that no work is planned or being done to further the wind port.
- As long as 335 acres are set aside for possible future development, there is always the possibility that a plan will arise to develop that land for some purpose. Using Mack Point must first be fully explored before turning a shovel on Sears Island, but over the last three years, we saw that a powerful coalition – including some of Maine's largest environmental groups – can be brought together in favor of developing Sears Island.

Offshore Wind Port Update



- Local and regional activists are seeking to conserve all of Sears Island.
- The Campaign to Protect Sears Island/Wahsumkik is working with State legislators and others to extend the conservation easement to cover the entire island.
- The Alliance for Sears Island recently updated its mission statement to read: “We support permanent conservation of all of Sears Island, and we support the development of a wind port facility at Mack Point, if any such facility is to be built in Penobscot Bay.”

How likely is it that all of Sears Island will be conserved? That's impossible to know, but it is encouraging to see that many people are passionate enough about the island to work so actively on this. We will continue to monitor this situation and keep our members and the public informed.

Trails & Island Projects

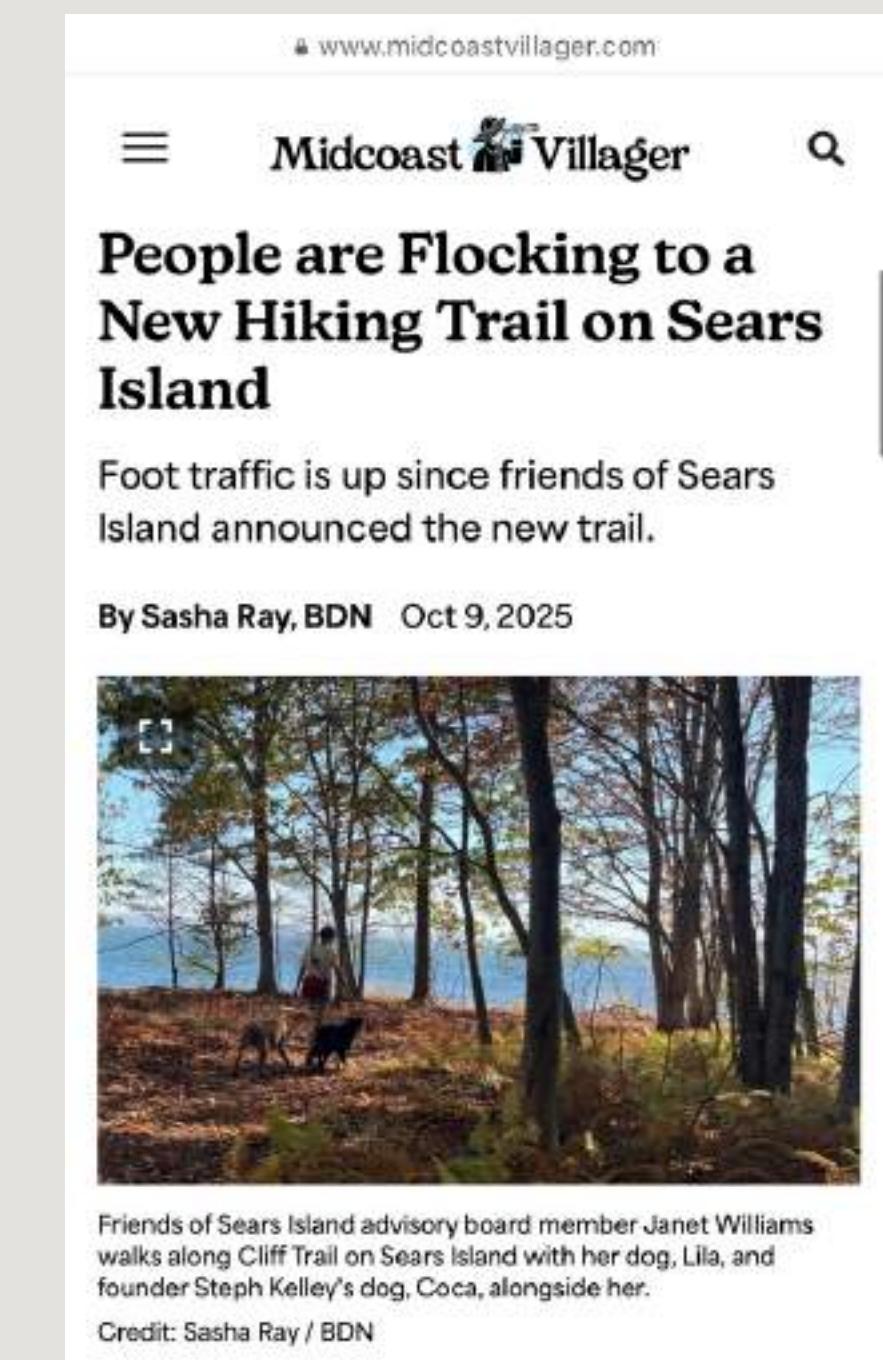
The 2025 trail crew were as busy as ever maintaining our numerous trails on Sears Island. There are always downed trees to remove, vegetation to mow or cut, and improvements to our trail signage that need to be done. We were fortunate that storms this year were fewer and less intense. Like other years though, the crew had numerous new projects to work on to enhance a visitor's experience on the island.



Trails & Island Projects

Major accomplishments in 2025 included:

- Replacing the old kiosk with a small 12x10 storage building with the new kiosk integrated into the shed design.
- The official opening of the Cliff Trail after being started in 2024. This beautiful, and a bit challenging trail connects the Eastern Ledges Trail to the Southern Shore Trail. Signs and red blazes on the trees were also added to make it easier to navigate the trail.
- Improving our display boards by installing plastic covers over them, making them more waterproof and easier to change.
- Adding four double-planked bog bridges to the Homestead Connector Trail in a section that is often muddy. The existing bridges were also improved for stability.



The screenshot shows a news article from the Midcoast Villager website. The header includes the website address (www.midcoastvillager.com), a menu icon, the publication name "Midcoast Villager", and a search icon. The main headline reads "People are Flocking to a New Hiking Trail on Sears Island". Below the headline is a subtext: "Foot traffic is up since friends of Sears Island announced the new trail." The author is listed as "By Sasha Ray, BDN Oct 9, 2025". Below the text is a photograph of a person walking a dog on a trail through trees, with a body of water visible in the background. A caption at the bottom states: "Friends of Sears Island advisory board member Janet Williams walks along Cliff Trail on Sears Island with her dog, Lila, and founder Steph Kelley's dog, Coca, alongside her. Credit: Sasha Ray / BDN".



Volunteer Engagement

Since Friends of Sears Island is a small nonprofit organization with one part-time staff, volunteers are essential to carry out our work. This year, we created a recruitment, engagement, and management plan for volunteers, which includes a volunteer coordinator who will keep track of and organize volunteers by their area of interest, and contact them when activities in which they expressed interest are taking place.

Much of the volunteer work currently is done by members of the FOSI Board and Advisory Group. This dedicated group of volunteers contributed over 2,500 hours in 2025. For larger projects, like the beach cleanup, we enlisted the help of volunteers from the community.

FOSI is very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers!



Volunteer Engagement

Some of the volunteer projects this year included:

- For a stewardship day, we organized a work party of six volunteers who cut up and removed several trees on the eastern beach, which had fallen in storms and made walking the beach at high tide challenging.
- Volunteers prepared the site for the new shed, raked the gravel that was added to level the ground, and built frames to be used for the map and bulletin board in the kiosk. Another volunteer created graphics and produced the newly expanded trail map and guide.
- Volunteers blazed the new Cliff Trail, mounted additional trail signs, and replaced the original rope handrails with thicker marine rope to make it safer to navigate up and down a ravine.
- Volunteers repaired existing bog bridges and installed some new planks on the connector from the Jetty Road to the Homestead Trail to improve this access to the trail.



Special Events

- FOSI continues to have special events throughout the year; some are fundraisers and some are to provide entertainment and connect FOSI to the community.
- Unfortunately, our summer solstice celebration in June, always a very popular event, had to be cancelled due to inclement weather.
- We tried something new for our winter solstice this year—and it was a big success! Instead of holding the event on the island, we had it in downtown Searsport in collaboration with several local businesses. We installed 500 luminarias along the streets, decorated a holiday tree with natural ornaments and lights, and had a glowing firepit—all which made Searsport look very festive! A highlight of the evening was a shadow puppet show about the shortest day with actors from Carver Memorial Library and Belfast High School.



Fundraising

- FOSI collaborated with three different venues for benefit dinners this year, Anglers, Delvino's, and Hey Sailor! Both Anglers and Delvino's donated part of their proceeds for that evening, and FOSI also received generous donations from customers coming in the door. The Hey Sailor! event included live music with a local band, and it attracted a different crowd, providing an opportunity to introduce this group to FOSI and our work on the island. Everyone had a great time!
- The towns of Belfast, Searsport, and Stockton Springs continue to support our fundraising efforts through grants. This year, FOSI again received a generous donation from the Jane and William Curran Foundation, which helped us design and install our new expanded kiosk with attached shed.
- One of our Board members donated aluminum water bottles with the FOSI logo on them, which can be used to raise funds, as well as promote FOSI. Also, the reusable bottles support our campaign to reduce plastic on the island.

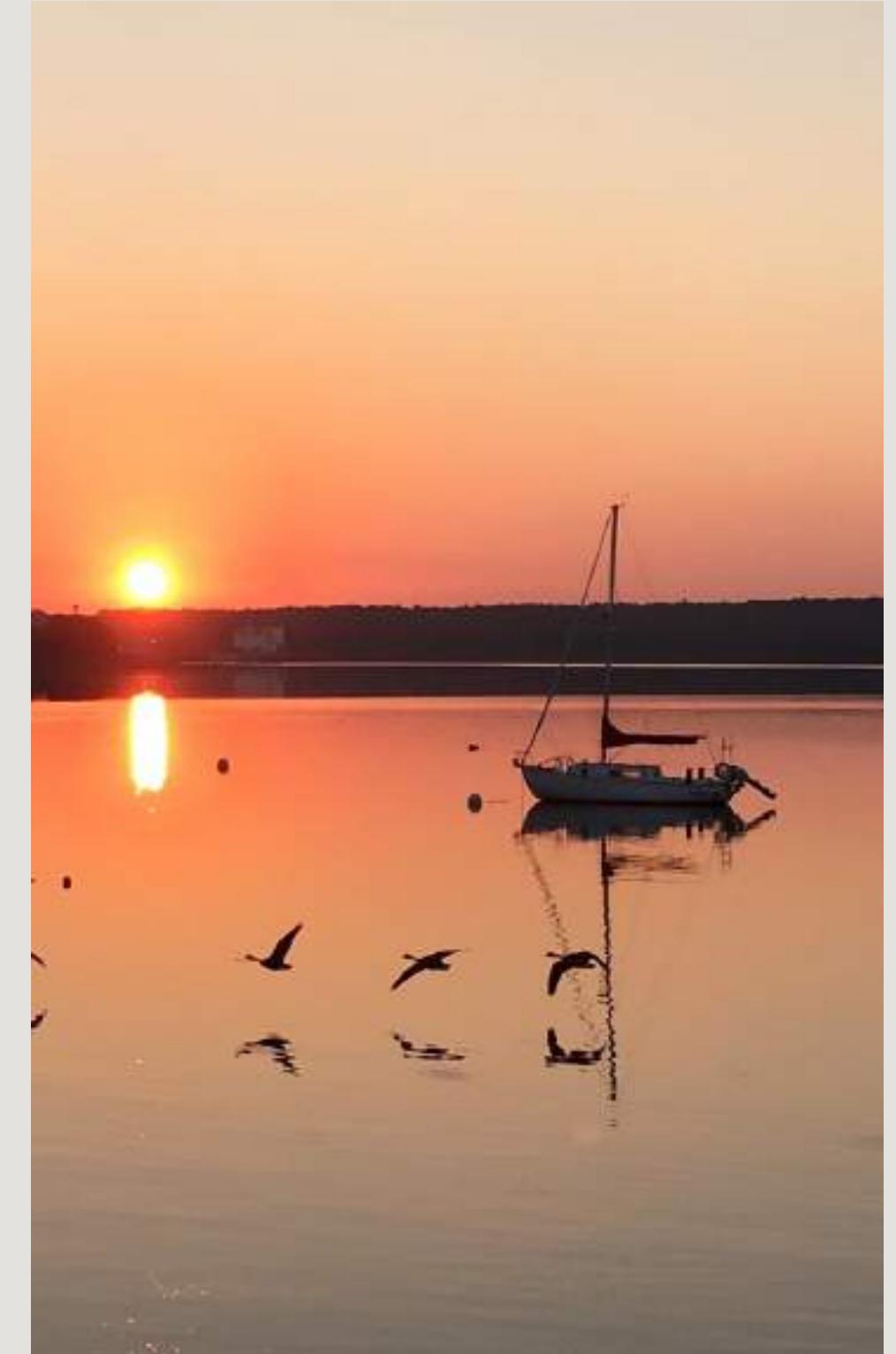


Financial Review

At the very end of December, we were surprised and thrilled to receive a \$30,000 anonymous unrestricted grant, the largest single gift we have ever received!

Without this grant, we were on course to experience an expected loss just under \$3,000. The reason for the expected deficit was the costs involved with buying and installing our new storage shed and information kiosk. We had received a grant the previous year to help pay for this improvement, but the funds were spent during 2025.

During 2025, our total fundraising from individuals, businesses, and special events increased by a little more than \$1,000. All of our programming and other expenses were as we had budgeted so, in all, we ended the year in good shape.



Financial Review

Income

Fundraising	\$33,532
Grants	\$32,750
Total Other Income	\$1,216
Total Income	\$67,497

Expenses

General Operating Expenses	\$1,521
Marketing Expenses	\$300
Printing Expenses	\$1,244
Program Expenses	\$32,223
Trail/Island Maintenance	\$5,906
Total Expenses	\$41,193
Net Operating Income	\$26,304

What's on the Horizon?

Although the most recent threat to Sears Island, building a wind turbine manufacturing facility, is off the table for now, Friends of Sears Island is continuing to monitor the State's plans for the island and will keep its constituents informed about any new developments in the coming year.

The following are some of our projects for 2026. We will:

- Contract with an invasive species expert to develop an implementation plan to control invasive plants and then remove them
- Explore new methods to document the number of people who use the island and participate in our events and programs



What's on the Horizon?

- Create a plan to help FOSI become a more sustainable organization, which includes:
 - Forming a Development Committee to oversee and coordinate all fundraising activities
 - Exploring innovative ways to raise funds, which may include holding special events (including tours of highlights of the island) for potential high donors, organizing an auction, renting out kayaks, etc.
 - Identify and implement a simple way to collect digital donations and contact information from program participants
 - Writing a grant to contract with a fundraising professional to help us eventually establish an endowment



What's on the Horizon?

- Establish and expand partnerships with public schools and libraries to involve them more in our educational activities
- Continue to work with the Alliance to Protect Sears Island and the Campaign to protect Sears Island/Wahsumkik and define the roles of each organization in preserving Sears Island's natural and cultural resources
- Offer one or more presentations by students from colleges, universities, and high schools who have used Sears Island as a research lab for their projects





Thank you for
another great year!

Honoring Susan White's Contributions to FOSI



