

Friends of Sears Island 2017 Annual Report

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www.friendsofsearsisland.org



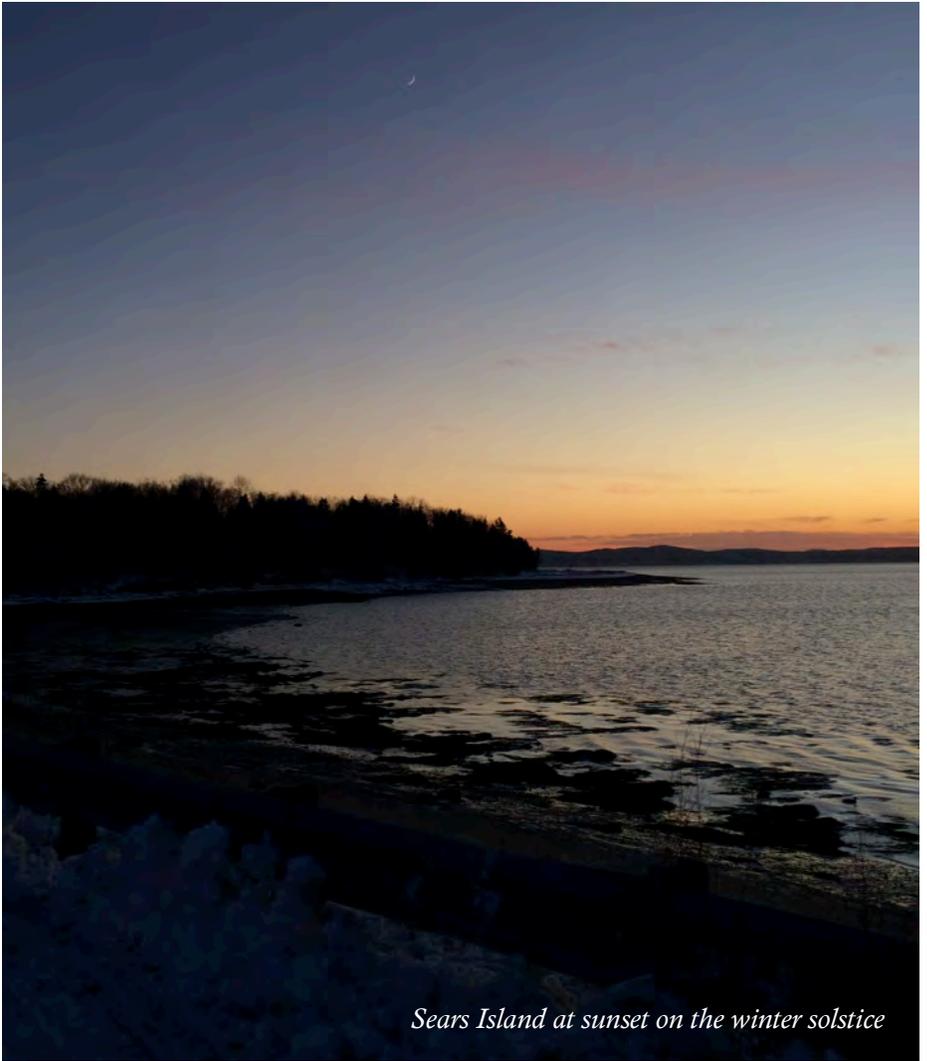
Children search for butterflies during the Monarch Watch tagging program.



Autumn branch weaving workshop with Sandi Cirillo.



Searsport High School students study clam predation with Brian Beal.



Sears Island at sunset on the winter solstice

This year Friends of Sears Island offered 18 programs, from March through October, attracting more than 350 participants of all ages. Expert guides helped us discover more about birds, medicinal plants, geology, archaeology, mushrooms, and butterflies that are all part of life on Sears Island. A very successful three-day children's program in August, as well as Tai Chi and yoga on the beach, rounded out our offerings. We finished off the year with Solstice by the Sea, our first annual winter solstice celebration on the beach, which drew a large crowd. In short, this has been our most ambitious and successful year since our founding in 2006!



2017 Highlights and Accomplishments

Over the past year, Friends of Sears Island has:

- Offered 18 on-island programs from March to October, which attracted over 350 participants—the most we ever had in a season!
- Maintained almost 6 miles of trails and collected trash from the beaches.
- Developed a stewardship guide for the island.
- Removed most of the invasive plant species from the island and monitored sensitive habitats with the help of interns from Unity College and Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Offered a three-day children's program and wellness programs, such as Tai Chi and yoga on the beach.
- Implemented a citizen-scientist program where participants helped collect important data on the plants and animals of Sears Island.
- Received the Monarch Butterfly Waystation designation for our milkweed field and offered a successful after-school monarch tagging program.
- Helped area schools use Sears Island as a living lab and college students conduct their research projects there.

Update on the Sears Island Stewardship Project

Taking care of Sears Island has continued to be a hands-on venture this year, our second year of implementing our new Stewardship Management Plan. As always, invasive plant control is at the forefront of our efforts. We also completed more biological monitoring on long-term study plots and sensitive areas. We were ably assisted by the Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District's Conservation Corps interns Jamie Behan and Sierra Hopkins. Jamie and Sierra learned about scientific data collection by assisting biologist Aleta McKeage in collecting data on plants growing in permanent plots, which are sampled every 5 years. This study will allow us to track changes in the natural community over time.

The interns and other volunteers are also actively involved in our major drive to control invasive plants on the island, and have removed stands of oriental bittersweet, purple loosestrife, garden valerian and Japanese barberry. A complete assessment of invasive plants was completed last year. Now we will focus on removing them, with a goal to eradicate many invasive species entirely. Sears Island, in fact, is one of the few locations in midcoast Maine that is relatively free of invasives and has the potential to be a healthy refuge for native plants and wildlife.

We are looking for volunteers to do further observation on invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and monarchs. This summer we hope to have high school and college interns again, and class projects involving biodiversity and island observations are also a possibility. If you are interested, please email greenwayscenter@gmail.com



Interns sample freshwater invertebrates on the stream that crosses the Green Trail with biologist John Tipping of Lotic, Inc.

FOSI Board & Advisors 2018

Board of Directors

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Susan K. White

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David Italiaander

Vice President

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Marietta Ramsdell, *Emeritus*

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Bill Kulbe

Jill Kulbe

Tom Mullin



Changes in Leadership

Marietta Ramsdell retired from the board at the end of year, after working to protect Sears Island since 2003. She was a member of FOSI and/or a board member since the organization was founded in 2006 and was president of the board for three years. Marietta was also involved in the negotiations that resulted in placing 601 acres of the island under a permanent conservation easement. She will remain a FOSI board member emeritus. FOSI would like to express our deepest gratitude to Marietta for her many years of service to our organization—she’s been there since the beginning and, as one board member expressed, “she’s the soul of Friends of Sears Island.”

After 13 years of being involved in efforts to determine the future of Sears Island and then as a member of the FOSI board, co-vice president Anne Crimaudo left the board in December to move to southern Maine. Dorothy Fraser stepped down as treasurer in May, with Brian Callahan coming on as our new treasurer. Maura DiPrete and Tony Kulik will be leaving the advisory group in 2018, with Cloe Chunn joining. Rolf Olsen joined the advisory group in 2017, and will be stepping up as co-vice president of the board this year. We sincerely appreciate the guidance, support, and leadership that each of these people has given to FOSI and consider ourselves very fortunate to have such a dedicated and active board of directors and advisory group.

New Installments on the Island

The DOT recently made new signs to notify the public that coyote hunting is not allowed and metal detecting is confined to the beaches. Jim Freeman built a picnic table that has been placed near the kiosk and enjoyed by many. Cloe Chunn graciously made new and improved trail signs that have been installed. David Italiaander and the children that participated in September's monarch butterfly tagging program worked together to install the new monarch waystation sign in the milkweed field along the Homestead Trail. Bill Kulbe recently placed a chain across the path that people have made down to the beach near the gate. Use of this path is causing considerable erosion and we hope the chain will encourage people to use the stairs by the kiosk instead. We would also like to thank David Italiaander for replacing the stair treads on the stairs to the eastern beach, and acknowledge the continuous efforts by our trail crew to keep the trails accessible to the public. Lastly, a special thanks goes out to the group of Pen Bay Stewards who spent a day removing trash from the island beaches by boat!

FOSI Fundraisers

This year we collaborated with several area restaurants and businesses to offer a series of dinner and shopping fundraisers. These fundraisers created a win-win situation for everyone. Not only did each business graciously donate a percentage of their profits to FOSI's education and conservation programs, but it also increased their business and provided an opportunity for community members to eat out or shop locally and support an environmental nonprofit! Thank you to Nautilus, Anglers, and Ocean's Edge restaurants, as well as the Searsport Grasshopper Shop for hosting these events.

First Annual Solstice by the Sea Celebration a Success

On December 21st, despite frigid temperatures, approximately 100 people gathered on Sears Island to celebrate the winter solstice! The crowd walked together along a path to the beach lit with hundreds of luminarias. We shared readings and sang "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles, and enjoyed cookies and hot cocoa together. It was a beautiful way to welcome the new season, with so many people gathered on the beach with stars above and a red crescent moon hanging low in the sky! Thank you to all of the volunteers who made this event possible, and to all of the folks who braved the cold to enjoy a celebration of light with us!



New trail sign made by Cloe Chunn



New picnic table made by Jim Freeman



Pen Bay Stewards beach clean-up day



Luminaria path at Solstice by the Sea



Photos from Kids Week 2017

FOSI to Pilot After-School Program in 2018

FOSI recently received a generous grant from the Davis Conservation Foundation for our project titled “Children as Citizen Scientists on Sears Island: Creating and Implementing a Place-Based After-School Program.” In the coming year, we will host an after-school program once a month for 12 students and their parents, during each month that school is in session. This program will engage children throughout the seasons as explorers, researchers, and stewards of their local environment, while also contributing valuable data to a variety of citizen science projects, including our own database of island biodiversity. We will be sharing more information about this exciting new program and how to sign up soon.

Upcoming Winter Programs

With assistance from a grant we received from the Maine Community Foundation in 2017, we were able to offer expanded children’s programming last summer and a wellness program for each season. We recently received a grant from the GBL Charitable Foundation as well, which will support our education and outreach efforts. We will be offering more winter programs this year. Mark your calendars!



- Feb 6th, 6:30pm at the Belfast Free Library: Dr. Mark McCollough, endangered species biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will present a talk titled, “The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, Maine’s Newest Endangered Species.” FOSI is co-sponsoring this event with the Belfast Free Library.
- March 7th, 6:30pm at the Belfast Free Library: Dr. Stephen Norton, University of Maine Emeritus Professor in the School of Earth and Climate Sciences, will give a talk on “The History of Air Pollution in Maine: What Lake Bottom Sediment Can Reveal.”
- March 17th, 10:00am on Sears Island: Winter Ecology Snowshoe/Hike with Cyrene Slegona, Maine Master Naturalist.
- April (date TBA) at the Belfast Free Library: Wildflower Identification Slideshow with Clare Cole, Maine Master Naturalist.

Friends of Sears Island

Net Worth Statement

As of December 31, 2017

Assets

	1/1/17	12/31/17	Change
Checking Account	\$4,553	\$20,313	\$15,760
Money Market Account	\$35,288	\$24,701	(\$10,587)
Total Assets	\$39,841	\$45,014	\$5,173

Liabilities & Equity

	1/1/17	12/31/17	Change
Liabilities	\$0	\$0	
Equity			
Opening Balance Equity	\$21,951	\$21,951	
Equity Additions	\$17,890	\$23,063	
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$39,841	\$45,014	\$5,173

Thanks to our treasurer, Brian Callahan, we have a clear picture of how we are doing financially.



We want to sincerely thank all of our individual, business, and nonprofit organization members, as well as our dedicated volunteers.

We couldn't do it without you!