

Protecting Sears Island's environmental and cultural resources



Friends of Sears Island

Annual Report 2015

This was a year of transition for Friends of Sears Island, and one of our priorities was putting systems in place to help FOSI run more smoothly. In the midst of all this, we had a very productive year and undertook several new initiatives.

Change in FOSI leadership

Marietta Ramsdell stepped down as president of Friends of Sears Island at the beginning of the year. The board presented her with a framed aerial photograph of the island, taken by Rolf Estela of Orono, in gratitude for her many years of tireless work and her long-standing commitment to the protection of Sears Island. Susan White, formerly vice president of FOSI, was elected president. Anne Crimando and David Italiaander are sharing the vice presidency, and Joanne McNally joined the Board of Directors as treasurer. Judy Kaiser will continue in her position as secretary. In addition, several FOSI active volunteers stepped up to become members of the Advisory Group, so we now have 11 advisors. All of these people keep FOSI going strong!

Sears Island Birds Featured on Website

An exciting addition to our website is the *Birds of Sears Island* slideshow. Karl Gerstenberger, a Belfast photographer, provided striking shots and descriptions of 38 land and water birds that he photographed on the island. Jim and Kathy Zeman of Bucksport provided their extensive list of birds they have seen on the island in the last couple of years, which can also be found on our website.



Yellow Warbler

Educational Collaborations

In the past year, we worked with teachers/professors and students at Searsport District High School and Unity College to develop stewardship and research projects on the island. With its broad diversity of habitats, plant and animal species, and micro-environments, the island provides an ideal learning laboratory for students.

FOSI Awarded Grants from Three Foundations

A fundraising committee was formed in July, and members were busy throughout the fall with a far-reaching annual appeal and submitting grant applications to several foundations. As 2015 drew to a close, we were very pleased to find out that FOSI had been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Davis Conservation Foundation and a \$6,450 grant from the Maine Community Foundation's Fund for Maine Land Conservation. These grants will fund a program to monitor sensitive sites and control invasive species on Sears Island. The project team will work with scientists and ecologists to survey the island; collect data and create maps of vulnerable habitats and invasive plant sites; train community volunteers to be involved in these efforts; begin invasive plant removal; and set up an ongoing monitoring program to help protect and preserve the diversity of Sears Island's natural resources. A \$1,000 grant from the GBL Charitable Foundation was also awarded for unrestricted general support of FOSI and its mission.

Getting FOSI Business in Order

This fall, we completed a **new improved database** in LibreOffice, which was used for our November fundraising appeal. The appeal went much more smoothly this year with our new

database in place. It has proven to be a better system for registering volunteer information, printing reports, and sending separate messages to specific categories: businesses, non-profits, FOSI members, prospective members, and volunteers. Many thanks to FOSI Advisory Group members Ann Flack and Tony Kulik for taking on this very important task. It makes all the difference in the world!

The FOSI **Strategic Plan 2016-2020** was completed (can be viewed at www.friendsofsearsisland.org/) and draft implementation plan developed. We have many ambitious goals for the next five years—and look forward to taking on these new challenges.

Short Takes

The **Sears Island trail map** was revised to reflect the boundaries of the Conservation Area and the Maine Department of Transportation Parcel. The poster in the kiosk and map handouts will be updated in the spring.

FOSI had a table at **Searsport Historical Day**, which was held on August 22 at the Searsport Historical Society's Coleman House on Sears Island Road. As part of FOSI's participation, Marietta Ramsdell led a successful guided walk for two families on Sears Island.

Alice Seeger, professional photographer and FOSI volunteer, produced a draft **PowerPoint program** about Sears Island and FOSI. We plan to finish it this winter, so we can use it for presentations to community groups and schools this spring.

We now have our **business and nonprofit organization members' logos** displayed on

our website, and they are linked to members' home pages. Check it out!

FOSI was the featured nonprofit at **The Good Kettle wine tasting** in Stockton Springs on September 17. We received 25 percent of their sales profits for the evening. With tasty appetizers, delightful wines, and good company—a great time was had by all! We look forward to collaborating on another event with Good Kettle next summer.

FOSI now has a **toll-free telephone number**, 1-855-430-2882, to call if you need information, want to join, or volunteer.



As always, a cadre of **dedicated volunteers** regularly cleared the trails of fallen branches, downed trees, and encroaching shrubs and weeds—keeping the island accessible for all to enjoy!

FOSI is co-sponsoring **Stewardship Day** with Coastal Mountains Land Trust on Saturday, May 14, 2016. We plan to begin with a presentation at the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport, and then participants will visit Sears Island and the two CMLT preserves in the area—Long Cove Headwaters Preserve in Searsport and Main Stream Preserve in Stockton Springs.

Call for Photos

We need photographs of people enjoying Sears Island in all seasons for our PowerPoint presentation, new brochure, and updated display. Please send JPEGs of photos to:

info@friendsofsearsisland.org.

We would like to sincerely thank all our individual, business, and nonprofit organization members. We could not do it without you!

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Sears Island dawn from east

2105 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

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Belfast Harbor Inn (Michael Schnetzer)
Colonial Gables Oceanfront Village
Coyote Moon (Michelle Walker)
Front Street Shipyard (J.B. Turner)
Islesboro Islands Trust (Steve Miller)

Pumpkin Patch Antiques (Phyllis Sommer)
Searsport Shores Ocean Campground
(Steve & Astrig Tanguay)
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Stewart's Blueberries (Cheryl & James Stewart)
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