

T H E T H O R O U G H F A R E



Notes from the Chairman

Ariana Fischer

I am happy to say that the Fall and Winter have been fairly uneventful on the island. We are lucky to have our same, full time six staff members and they have already begun lining up the summer interns. The Trustees and committees have been hard at work researching and developing plans for a variety of areas including buildings, finances, waterfront, community relations, and the farm.

The Board of Trustees convened in early February for their annual budget meeting. Over two days, the Trustees reviewed a budget which is typically based on past expenses with proposed special projects for the upcoming year (a.k.a. capital expenditures). We discussed fixed costs (insurance and taxes), membership dues and possible attrition, income, annual repairs/maintenance on buildings and equipment, and proposed capital expenditures (those items that may be necessary and are larger than annual repairs and maintenance).

This year, we reviewed the Building Committee’s assessment of the deferred maintenance. Budgetary constraints in the recent past required several major repairs to be tabled. The committee, spearheaded by Lindsay Smith (and in collaboration with Chris Cutler, Chris McCormick, and Bruce) has prioritized, with estimates, the work to be completed. These projects are essential to maintaining our infrastructure and the investment made here should last a number of years. The Trustees are analyzing how best to fund and complete the work in a timely manner and are working with the Finance Committee on a plan for Capital Spending. It has not been since 1992, when there was a special assessment to the membership, that we have faced such a large scope of work. Some of the immediate work proposed is: work on the structures that house our water system, the waterfront buildings, some window and clapboard replacement on the Red House, exterior rot on the Farmhouse, and replace windows in the Main Barn. These represent the first of several years of projects.

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Notes cont'd

Proposed Capital Spending also includes pieces of major equipment. For example, the Peabody needed major structural repairs after 27 years of service. She is now at the Jonesport Shipyard; the majority of the repairs will be done by June with the final work completed next fall/early winter.

This past Fall, we assembled an ad hoc Marine Committee to review all items considered 'waterfront.' (see Marine Committee Report). One highlight to mention is that after much research and deliberation a second vessel, the Little Spruce, was purchased. We needed a relief boat for the lengthy period that the Peabody would be hauled out for repairs. Little Spruce is a 25' lobster style fiberglass boat, intended as a more nimble workboat and a second ferryboat. Having this vessel will enable the staff to do regular maintenance on the Peabody. We looked into renting a vessel but that did not make financial sense. This is a trial period to see if having a second vessel works for us functionally and financially. It is agreed that if she does not, we can sell her and recoup our investment.

We recently had success in challenging the town of Jonesport regarding Marsh and Northeast Bar islands being contiguous to Roque – the town had been taxing us as if they were not connected to the main island. We won our appeal, thanks to John Higgins' efforts, and as a result that area of the island is now taxed as Farmland. We also recently presented arguments before the Maine Supreme Court regarding the discriminatory valuation of our buildings by the town. We expect to hear the results sometime in the early summer. In addition, we have filed a petition to have all of Roque Island, except for 5.3 acres comprising the Compound area, included under Farmland tax status.

Roque is a volunteer organization and the participation of the membership is necessary for its success. We have always had and encourage an active committee structure to be involved – the research, work, and input they give is essential to the Board. With every new board, all of the committees are reviewed, dissolved, and reappointed as most of them are ad hoc in nature. We invite and encourage all of you to volunteer, in your area of interest or expertise. (See web-site for list of committees). The health and wealth of our island, relies on the largesse and commitment of those who volunteer their time, energy, vision, and generosity. We are so very grateful for those who preceded us, stand today, and will join in tomorrow. Your feedback and participation is invaluable.

The Annual Meeting is on April 29th this year, and I hope that you will join us as it will be very informative. We will be talking about how the island runs –managing and investing in the infrastructure, planning for the future, and our relationship with our community- it will be very educational! We especially encourage young members to come for this very reason.

Our little corner of the planet needs you! Become a steward of our island environment.

Please join the Naturalists' Club each year when you pay your annual bill. Funds go to important things like planting trees, maintaining trails & bridges, keeping fields open, insuring Roque is in compliance with environmental regulations, and monitoring the health of our island's natural resources. The Roque Naturalists help keep the whole family informed about the amazing richness and diversity of our little corner of the world. And don't forget to take a trip to the Family Room when you're on the island to see years of fascinating records and artifacts that document our incredible natural heritage.





A Word from Our Manager

Bruce Patterson

The 2016/17 winter has for the most part been very mild on Roque with the exception of close to 4 feet of snow on the ground at one point and many days of winds in excess of 50mph bringing down numerous trees across the island. I am sad to report that ice cutting did not take place due to the mild weather conditions.

Organizing and planning for upcoming projects both large and small has begun. Most projects are very weather dependent so we have to have materials on hand and people lined up for when the weather cooperates so we can jump on them.

The Peabody is presently at Jonesport Shipyard for several weeks of badly needed work. This was made possible by the purchase of a 1985 25 foot lobster style boat as a 2nd vessel. She is named the Little Spruce and will be used a good bit over the season transporting off island helpers and supplies.

The year round cast of characters are presently the same as last year and I expect it to remain that way. Stephanie will be running around the farm, Jay will be making repairs and tackling a few other projects, Matthew will be on the waterfront, Zana will be at the farmhouse cooking and shopping, Selena will be in the houses and I will be doing whatever it is I do. Our off island crew is not fully set yet but we are working on filling what needs to be filled. After 3 or 4 months of seeing the same faces and listening to the same stories we are looking forward to having more people on the island getting it ready for the season.

I hope to be getting out into the neighboring communities a bit more this year than in the past with plans on attending annual community meetings and other local functions.

We are all looking forward to the season getting underway and seeing everyone have a great holiday on your island.



Little Spruce

Web-site update

As you all know, last fall we implemented a major overhaul of Roque's website. The old one had served us well enough, but it was simply time for an upgrade. Feedback so far for the website has been overwhelmingly positive. There are a lot of advanced tools that I'm really hoping will make everyone's time on Roque that much more enjoyable and easy. Here are my notes so far:

- The backend of updating the site seems to be working like a charm. Tanya Fischer and I experimented a bit with this earlier in the fall while updating some member information, and it seemed to be a much smaller learning curve than I had feared.
- News updates are operating perfectly.



Web-site update cont'd

- The photo gallery has added nearly 1,000 old photos from the archives. All old photo albums and daguerreotypes have been added. Lots of content to go through.
- Use of the feedback and corrections forms for address changes and family tree are also operating perfectly. Tanya Fischer and I make changes as appropriate.
- The Boat Schedule page. This will be a big improvement. Bruce and Matt are the ones who have made the boat schedules in the past. It will be a bit more complicated to keep this up to date, but I will coach them through the process to make sure there are no issues. This will be our first season using it, so we'll have to keep an eye on how well it's working.
- Also new: the boat request feature... It sends an email to Bruce and Matt requesting a boat ride on a day and time. Again, an experiment. We'll see how it works, and I'll adjust accordingly going forward. My apologies in advance if anything goes awry. Much of this depends on the vigilance of the staff to check their emails. I'll make a note in the form to make sure members understand they'll need to receive confirmation. Life gets busy on the island, but I'm hoping this will work out.
- The grocery form... This also works like a charm, and was added at the request of the staff. Emails go directly to Zana and Bruce at the moment. Same issues and solutions as above.
- Please note: I have taken down the Online Reservation Request form. Reservations will be done the old way for now. (It's technical, but the widget I use for the forms only allows one calendar input, so you wouldn't be able to select your top 3 options when reserving a spot on the island.) I'll work on this...

Finally, the website performance itself... The website has averaged between 3 and 30 visits a day (which for the size of our family isn't bad at all). This is all off-season, mind you, and I expect those figures will rise as we approach summertime.

But all-in-all, I think people are enjoying the upgrade. This will be our first full season with the new site online, but I'm hopeful we've ironed out and accounted for any potential issues. We'll see how it goes, and then adjust accordingly going forward. Everything is changeable.

Future upgrades:

- An online store to sell our goods to the family. This would potentially cost \$15/month if we approve. Orders can be made and processed any way we choose, including online (processing fees may apply for that part).
- Continued improvements to the ease of use of the website.

Thanks to all who helped me put this together. It's a big step forward. As always, please report to me any issues, and I'll get right on it.

John Pat M. Higgins (web master & designer)
jhiggins@mac.com

Note from the editor: please consult the web-site (www.roqueisland.com) for the most up to date information, such as the directory and the committee lists.



Barnyard Buzz

By Stephanie Gardner

Ahh...Spring, where we go from four feet of snow to two feet of mud in only ten days!!! We've enjoyed another mild winter with no real snow accumulation until February. But who knows, Maine weather is anything but predictable. However, you'll find no complaining on this end, with the mud comes warmth and new possibilities. There's always something to do: planning this year's garden design, waking up the greenhouse and preparing for all the new critters.

All the seeds for the garden have arrived and the greenhouse is starting to burst to life with its first seedlings of the season. Onions, leeks, shallots, brussels sprouts, and celery are beginning to peek their tiny heads out from the soil; if only the sun would shine through the fog!

As always baby chicks are due to arrive in a couple of weeks and sheep shearing is scheduled for end of March-boy do they need a trim! Next will be lambs, lambs and more lambs and the latest installment of lamb tv; the most entertaining show on the farm. The large animals are still enjoying their freedom, though they never travel far from the hay source, chow hounds through and through.

With the change of the season we also will be seeing a change of staff. Kat is beginning to further develop her cheese making skills and pursue a small market garden of her own, always so ambitious. I'm also happy to report that although Erica won't be returning to Roque this summer, she has accepted a full time position as a farmer and educator at Randall's Island Urban Farm in New York City. The tools she learned here on Roque made her a hot commodity down in the big city. I must say, though I know we will all miss seeing these two wonderful women this season, I am so very proud of them both. They both brought so many wonderful things to the farm and I am glad that all the knowledge learned here will be put to good use and develop another generation of farmers.

But with departures come fresh faces! We will have a new "Kat" joining us this season. Katerina Graham, an education student at the University of Maine (Machias) will be joining us as the new farm assistant. She was not only Kat and Erica approved, but is a capable and eager young woman. She is excited to learn all aspects of farming and I look forward to having her join us. We are still on the hunt for an intern but I know we will find someone great!

And that's all the updates I have as of now. I am, as always, eager to see you all this coming season. I look forward to welcoming you back to the garden, for chores with the kiddos and all the beauty and bounty summer has to offer. Until then, be well and get ready for another season in this little corner of paradise.

The greenhouse - inside and outside





From the Kitchen Cupboard

Uchi Brussel Sprouts with Fish Caramel Sauce by Zana Brooke

This recipe comes from my favorite restaurant in Austin, Uchi. It's a unique way to liven up this great winter storage crop into something new and deliciously different. My friends and I call them "crack sprouts" because they are so addicting and delectable. The "fish caramel" - a reduction of fish sauce and some other ingredients - gives these sprouts their spicy umami flavor

Fish caramel

Ingredients:

(All roughly chopped)

2 TBSP fat (I used lard; you can use duck fat or any type of oil you like)

1 stalk lemongrass, mashed with the back of a knife

1 whole head of garlic, above 12 cloves

1 large shallot

3 Thai chilis

Large knob of ginger, about 1/4 cup, peeled

1 cup fish sauce

1 cup water, 1 cup sugar (or sub 1 cup agave nectar and add 1/2 cup water)

1 medium onion

optional: 1 handful of mint

optional: 1 handful of basil

optional: 1 handful of cilantro

Preparation: Take all ingredients except the fish sauce, sugar, and water, and put them in a saucepan over medium low heat. I recommended stainless steel over non-stick because it will let a fond (tasty little bits on the bottom of the pan) develop. Allow the ingredients to caramelize, about 15 minutes, low and slow. Do not be tempted to turn up the heat, caramelization takes time. Feel free to stir as necessary. Once the shallots and garlic have caramelized, deglaze the pan with the fish sauce. This means pouring it in, grabbing a utensil and using it to break up the caramelized bits at the bottom of the pan until they're incorporated into the sauce. Add the sugar and water, and turn the heat up until the sauce begins to boil. Reduce by half until syrupy, 20 – 30 minutes. Strain and cool.

Brussels sprouts

Ingredients:

2 lbs. Brussels sprouts, washed, dried, bottom part cut off and halved

1/4 cup fish caramel

1/4 cup sweet chili sauce or sambal

Fresh grated ginger to taste

Lemon juice to taste

Instructions

Flash fry by turning the heat up as hot as possible and use grapeseed oil. Fry until the outside is nice and crispy. Toss with fish caramel and sweet chili sauce/sambal, grate fresh ginger on top, and squeeze a lemon. Enjoy!



The sprouts



Reflections

Erica Harte, former farm intern

I've been reading a lot lately about people from Generation Y and Millennials making dramatic decisions to turn away from the corporate ambitions of their parents' generation and instead pursue simpler, more traditional lifestyles. A return to farming, to homespun gifts, to tiny houses on large swaths of land and to rural landscapes instead of urban ones. Urban farming has also shot through the roof and people the world over are taking up traditional crafts and food preserving skills at rates we haven't seen since the 1930s. There are many explanations given for the shift: dissatisfaction in corporate culture, a lack of impact or meaning found in work, among many others. However I have a simpler explanation. Community. In the age of electronics and the global economy we find fewer meaningful relationships being made. It's easy to text someone if you don't feel like showing up for your lunch plans and why go out when you can binge watch the most recent season of *Peaky Blinders* on Netflix? There are many reasons I believe people have become dissatisfied with "typical" American life but community is the defining factor that links them all.

In so many ways technology allows us to reach out to people and places few of us were likely to experience before. However, with that access to the far reaches of the world many of us have lost touch with our neighbors, with our family with the people we actually see everyday.

When I began my journey to Roque I had no idea that it was community I was searching for. No clue that I'd not only gain skills and experiences that will be with me for life but more importantly I rediscovered what it meant to work and be accepted into a community. I found that not only was I able to be more productive, I was happier. I knew the people around me cared for me because they showed it, they supported me and I supported them. After my first summer I found that the most difficult aspect in a return to "regular" life; the lack of support. I found myself acutely aware of who I could depend on and who I could not. Through it all my Roque family was there by my side no matter what obstacle I faced.

Editor's Note: Ashley Harte, Erica's sister, worked as an assistant to Jay last summer. She echoes her sister's sentiments, emphasizing in particular how her boss's encouragement and guidance allowed her confidence to grow, and so her capabilities.

Roque Island is an indescribable and invaluable place. A whirlwind of subtlety and simplicity with abundant things to accomplish and no distractions but the people at your side and the natural world around you. I often find I come up short when I try to describe my time and experiences on this magical island. There's simply no way to do it justice. And so often I don't try. However, I will say this: it wasn't until Roque, until I met this incredible staff and your generous family that I knew what I'd been yearning for, a community to call my own. That a genuine connection to people and the common goals we sought together would fill my life with meaning and allow me to slough the rest of the clutter by the wayside.

I put off writing this article for some time, I think because I knew once I wrote it, the truth couldn't be ignored any longer. Sadly, I will not be returning to the Island this summer. I have accepted a full time position at the Randall's Island Urban Farm in New York City. I am beyond thrilled for this new opportunity and I can say without a doubt I wouldn't be moving to this next phase of my life with out my time on Roque. The support from your entire family and the staff on this island has given me an opportunity to grow and become apart of yet another great community. And while I am eager to see where this new path leads my heart aches when I think of the people and animals I will leave behind on those verdant shores. Please know how much you all mean to me, that I am changed for knowing you and being apart of the beautiful vision your forefathers had the wisdom to create; it is an unmatched thing of beauty.

I'll leave you all with this: I've read many novels that speak of a time gone by, of a summer or a season left untouched in the mind that stands out no matter how much time has passed. I've always wondered if I'd have a season like that. A place and experience that I'd hold in my mind and heart until the end of my days; many people never do. But I am certain that for as long as I live, my time on Roque will be such a place and time for me.



From the Historical Records - George Herrick

William H.H. Murray's book, Adventures in the Wilderness (1869), was widely popular amongst those wishing to vacation in the Adirondacks and became indeed an historic book at a time when a romantic view of nature was transcendent. It probably would at least have been known to the Gardners when they resettled Roque Island in 1882. The attached list might be of interest to Roque Island readers.

Ladies' Outfit

A lady at my elbow, recalling how valuable a few suggestions would have been to her five years ago in respect to what is most appropriate and serviceable for a lady to wear in the wilderness, inserts the following list:

A net of fine Swiss mull, made as we have previously described, as protection against mosquitoes, gnats, etc.

A pair of buckskin gloves, with armllets of chamois-skin or thick drilling, sewed on at the wrist of the glove and buttoned near the elbow so tightly as to prevent the entrance of flies.

For the head, a soft felt hat, such as gentlemen wear, rather broad in the brim. This is light and cool for the head, and a good protection from sun and rain.

A flannel change throughout.

Thick balmoral boots, with rubbers.

A pair of camp shoes, water proof, warm and roomy.

Short walking-dress, with Turkish drawers fastened with a band tightly at the ankle.

Waterproof or rubber coat and cap

A pair of Lisle-thread or kid gloves

To this I add, as it occurs to me at this point, that no party should go into the wilderness unprovided with linen bandages, prepared lint, salve, and whatever else is needed in case of accident. You will not, probably, have occasion to use them, but if any casualty should occur they would be of the utmost service.

Report on the store - Rebecca Campbell

The store, in the first four years of its existence, has become part of the Roque Island experience. It has also generated much needed income for the island. For the four year period, the total gross sales were \$49,723.06 and the net profit was \$27,681.41 which is the equivalent of 11.5 membership fees at the current rate of \$2425/member.

Archivists to visit the island - Ellen Berger

During July of 2016 Casey Riley, Assistant Curator at the Boston Athenaeum and a consulting curator at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, along with Shana McKenna, Archivist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, were invited to the island to look at archives stored within the Gardner and Mansion Houses. In follow-up conversations they were consulted on a process for conserving and cataloguing our archives and have graciously offered to volunteer their time to help us in this effort in May.

They will be joining us at Roque from May 18th – May 21st to begin a process of organizing, cataloguing, conserving and historicizing our artifacts. They will be staying at the Red House and hosted on the island by John Higgins, Becca Campbell and Ellen Berger.

Thank you to Casey and Shana! We are thrilled to have these experts on the island to help us jumpstart our conservation efforts at Roque!! Future efforts will involve digitization, databasing and making our archives accessible to researchers for use in scholarship.



I.S.G. in her canoe



Squire's Point

Eastern Maine Conservation Initiative (EMCI) by George Herrick

EMCI, founded by RIGHC members in 1996, is a non-profit organization with broad conservation interests that seeks to help foster environmentally sustainable communities in Eastern Maine, encourage an appreciation of their cultural geography, and promote the conservation of its ecological resources through natural history research. In so doing, EMCI works to fill a recognizable gap in funding coverage of the Maine coast by focusing on the region between Mount Desert Island and the Canadian border. The initiative followed from RIGHC's 1992 Long Term Plan objective of developing and maintaining good working relationships with public and private scientific and conservation organizations in Eastern Maine and extending the potential of RIGHC's conservation effort in the area.

Through 2016, EMCI has awarded 78 grants to the value of \$208,160. In the scientific area, EMCI has supported graduate student studies, botanical studies, bird migration, Atlantic salmon recovery, red tide research, herring spawning, spruce paleoecology and tidal currents, among other subjects. On the cultural side, support has gone to efforts of local historical societies, museums and libraries that are custodians of information and artifacts relevant to local history to bring their archives into the digital age and to display their treasures. Through interaction with grantees and their institutions, EMCI has spread its reputation and developed extensive knowledge of the conservation world in Eastern Maine of value, in return, to RIGHC management of Roque Island.

Also, EMCI now holds five full or partial conservation easements on five islands in the Roque Island Archipelago, full easements on Little Spruce, Double Shot and Anguilla, partial easements on Great Spruce and Marsh Island. It is EMCI's responsibility to ensure environmental monitoring of the easements as a formal state requirement. The easements provide an important measure of real estate tax shelter for RIGHC.

The market value of EMCI's investment account as of 31 December 2016 was \$243,495.69, while the book value stood at \$187,513.67. EMCI has been making grants of about \$15,000 over the past few years. To maintain momentum, grow further, and meet expenses as on monitoring the easements, EMCI must rely on donations from RIGHC family members and friends. Annual appeals are made to generate the needed donations. Please contribute.

Although EMCI has no legal attachment to RIGHC, EMCI derived its mission and energy from the long experience of wildlife and historical conservation on Roque Island. Current EMCI board members, all from RIGHC, are Samuel Campbell, Anastasia Fischer (Secretary), Tatiana Fischer (Treasurer), Randy Goodhue, George Herrick (President), Jason Herrick and Nicholas Higgins.

Flotsam

Caleb Gardner Newman was born to Rebecca and Jeff Newman on February 8.

His great grandmother, Mary Macauley (Cauley) Lukens, died on February 17. She was born in Boston on March 15, 1936. She will be buried at Roque next to her husband, John Lukens.

Susan Kobusch Gardner, wife of John L. (Jack) Gardner, was born on May 11, 1923. They were married February 26, 1944. She died on February 10, just short of their 73rd anniversary.



As recorded in the Wall Street Journal



The Naturalists' Column

Matthew writes “last month Jay and I saw a bird flying south over the eastern facing hill in the front of the farm house. From what we could tell it was a dark bodied bird with a bright orange beak and a white face. It was not anything we had seen out here before.”

He did some research and found an article in CBC News which reported the sighting of a tufted puffin on Machias Seal Island in June 2014. It was first spotted by the lighthouse keeper, Ralph Eldridge, and then confirmed by Tony Diamond, a professor of Biology at the University of New Brunswick.

What is extraordinary is that these birds are common on the Pacific coast from Alaska to northern California. The last report of one on the East Coast dates to the 1830's. One wonders how did this individual get here? The most plausible explanation is that there was enough open water to let it go through the Northwest passage. The other possible route would have taken it all the way south to Cape Horn and back up along the east coast of the continent. Seabirds such as these need open water so as to feed as they travel, so it could not have survived a transcontinental journey.



Tufted puffin
Photo by Ralph Eldridge

Report from the Marine Committee

Julian Fischer

The Marine committee has participated in the following activities pertaining to Roque's marine issues in 2016 and the first month of 2017. We traveled to Roque to interview the staff concerning the need for a second boat, the problems with Roque Bluff's wharf and needed repairs, and the issue of waterborne erosion on the filled portion of Roque Island's wharf in Shorey Cove. We mounted an extensive search for a suitable second boat, a search that eventually ended when the staff located what they needed and which was eventually purchased.

We established a dialogue with Dana Urquart concerning needed repairs to Roque Bluff wharf and by November work with Dana and Chris McCormick was proceeding apace. Dana reported soon after that the remedial work was finished. However a plan for more necessary restoration would be forthcoming in the Spring. We met at Roque with the staff, Chairman Fischer, and an engineer to discuss the problems with the Shorey Cove wharf. Various solutions were offered and we were certainly grateful for professional advice. Implementation will occur in more suitable seasons.

We want your articles and photographs!

To submit an article or photograph for the next Thoroughfare, please contact the editor, Nina Herrick.

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