As part of a coast-wide effort to gather data on black skimmers, BiodiversityWorks teamed up with The Trustees and MassWildlife to capture and band 12 black skimmer chicks in Edgartown this year.

Martha’s Vineyard represents the northern breeding range of these beach-nesting birds, and the colony here has grown over the years. In the spring of 2017, we began our collaborative project to capture chicks and attach leg bands that will allow birders and biologists to re-sight them and record their locations over time. This year we banded four chicks at Little Beach, which we co-manage with Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation, and eight at Norton Point, which is managed by The Trustees. The data we collect from re-sights will help us better understand movements, survival rates and site fidelity of Vineyard skimmer chicks.

We tagged 11 skimmer chicks in 2017, six of which have been resighted at four locations along the east coast: three on Coney Island, NY, last fall; one on Ferdinand Beach, FL, last winter; one on Long Island, NY, in September; and one on Cape May, NJ, last October.

Black skimmers nest on beaches between the Carolinas and Massachusetts, but only recently arrived on the Vineyard. About 12 pairs nest at two or three Edgartown sites each year, and have had high fledgling success. We also see a clear movement of adults between those sites, which we hope to better understand by banding adult skimmers in 2019. Among other things, it will be interesting to see whether banded chicks return to the Vineyard as adults to breed, or if they join colonies in New York and New Jersey, where the birds number in the hundreds. Over time, we hope to create a baseline for future research and management.

Looking ahead, shorebird coordinator Kayla Smith is building a treadle trap that we can use to capture and band adults next year and hopefully learn more about their movements on the Island. Stay tuned for more updates in the summer!

Top: Flyby at Norton Point
Middle: Kayla Smith, Caitlin Borck (The Trustees) and Liz Baldwin with black skimmer chicks prior to release
Bottom: A banded skimmer chick a week after banding at Little Beach
Top photo by Lanny McDowell, bottom photo by Jeff Bernier
In August, shorebird biologist Kayla Smith spotted an orange band on a common tern in Edgartown and took a photo. Based on the photo, we reported the band’s color and code to the federal Bird Banding Laboratory in Maryland, which informed us that the bird had migrated all the way from Argentina, a distance of at least 7,200 miles.

Banded birds don’t necessarily enjoy special protection, but reporting them to the federal database gives researchers information on migration stopover and feeding sites, and bird longevity. For anyone studying terns in Argentina, for example, the re-sight this summer will tell them where that specific tern was fueling up during migration, just as re-sights of birds we band on the Vineyard typically tell us where they overwintered.

Kayla wasn’t disappointed by the somewhat limited amount of data on the visiting tern. “It’s still cool to know that the birds we’re looking at, they really travel,” she said.

Anyone with good eyes, a scope, binoculars, a clear photograph or a bird in the hand can report bands to the bird banding lab, which first got off the ground in 1920. (Even bands without birds, as may result from mortality, can be reported.) On the Vineyard, terns are the most difficult to re-sight, since the bands tend to disappear on their short legs. American oystercatchers are the most commonly re-sighted birds on the Island, as they return every year to breed.

“We double or triple check what we are reading off the bands, and try to get an image if we can,” BiodiversityWorks director Luanne Johnson said of the process. The data is then added to a central database via the USGS website pwrc.usgs.gov.

With a federal banding permit, biologists first band birds with a metal band stamped with a federal number that is only visible up close. Color bands, in unique combinations, can allow observers to identify and report individuals, and these bands require a separate permit. In Massachusetts, researchers always use yellow bands for oystercatchers and orange for black skimmers. The colors are visible from afar, but reading the letters and numbers still requires a closer view, which can be tricky if the birds aren’t cooperating, which is usually the case.

Sometimes during the spring and late summer, banded birds will pass through on their way to their way north to breeding grounds or south to wintering grounds. Birder and photographer Jeff Bernier snapped a photo of a piping plover on Little Beach in August (right), and its white flag told us it was banded in Canada. We reached out to the researchers, who were able to tell us that the bird was banded on July 26, 2017 as a chick near Round Bay in Nova Scotia. She was spotted wintering in the Bahamas, and again this summer in Nova Scotia.

The unique color combinations on a bird’s legs can help us discern which pair is which; and their presence every year allows us to deduce mortality rates, since we assume that birds that do not return to breed have died. The bands may also tell us whether nesting and overwintering birds are using the same roost sites from year to year; and where they are stopping along their migrations. The relatively high survival rate among adult beach-nesting birds on the Vineyard is deduced largely from capture and re-sight data.

Kayla stressed the importance of not only banding new birds but also tracking those that were banded previously. She encouraged anyone who gets a good look at a band – either in person or in a photo – to take a few minutes and file a report at pwrc.usgs.gov and share it on the local MV Bird Alert facebook group. “You can catch a bird and put a band on it,” she said, “but it’s not helpful if people see it and don’t report it.”
Thanks to Simon Hickman of West Tisbury, we confirmed that northern long-eared bats are hibernating on Martha’s Vineyard. This is big news, as biologists had long assumed that all bats on the Island migrate 50 to 300 miles to hibernate in caves or mines on the mainland.

Simon had been reading our newsletters and contacted us last November about bats flying in an unfinished basement on his property. We identified them as northrens by recording their calls inside and outside with a bat detector. The house was built in the 1970s on a cinderblock foundation, and the bats likely used a narrow gap between the bulkhead and the house to get inside. With high humidity and temperatures above freezing all winter, the basement provided habitat similar to the caves and mines where bats hibernate on the mainland — and where white-nose syndrome has killed off more than 90 percent of this once-abundant species. The basement tested positive for *Pseudogymnoascus destructans (Pd)*, the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome.

Based on acoustic monitoring, Simon’s bats were awake about every four days in the winter. The arousals often coincided with emergence (calls recorded inside and outside the basement a few minutes apart), on nights with average temperatures around 43°F. Similar behavior was documented by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and by SUNY Albany PhD candidate Samantha Hoff on Long Island, where tagged northrens had led her to a crawlspace under a house that was then monitored for the winter.

Bats with white-nose syndrome typically emerge during hibernation, but most die from a loss of fat stores, since no food is available in the winter. But milder winters on the coast could mean that our northrens are able to feed on insects when they emerge. In addition, body temperatures would rise during feedings, and possibly slow or halt the growth of the fungus. The availability of food on the Vineyard and other coastal islands in the winter could be one reason these small populations are surviving.

We are pursuing more funding in order to conduct insect surveys during the winter months to better understand what is available for overwintering bats to eat.

Activity inside and outside of Simon’s basement ceased around the third week of April, which is typically when we begin to record increasing bat activity in Island forests, as daytime temperatures and sunlight are suitable for tree roosting.

Simon was concerned about disturbing the hibernating bats when he periodically entered his basement last winter, so he wanted to build a hibernaculum just for them. After researching building materials and consulting with BiodiversityWorks, he constructed The Batz-Carlton hibernaculum (right), which was completed in April. We have yet to document any visitors at the site this fall, but northrens are back in the cinder block basement they used last winter.

Working with private landowners to protect wildlife is at the heart of our mission, and Simon’s efforts on behalf of these rare bats were exemplary! We believe that other northrens are overwintering in basements or cellars elsewhere on Martha’s Vineyard, as they are on Nantucket and Long Island.
Solving the Bat Riddle

**Northeast Islands Collaborate under Yearlong FWS Grant**

Martha’s Vineyard isn’t the only island where northern long-eared bats appear to be persisting in the face of white-nose syndrome. For the last few years, BiodiversityWorks has been collaborating with researchers on Long Island and Nantucket to document the unique hibernation behaviors that we believe are keeping these small populations alive.

The three-island collaborative received a $25,100 grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service this year to test our hypothesis that coastal populations of northern long-eared bats have evolved unique hibernation behaviors that help them to persist amidst *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd), the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. The yearlong study is one of a kind in the Northeast, and a rare investigation into how some bats are surviving the disease. Jonathan Reichard, assistant white-nose syndrome coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, noted that biologists everywhere are watching closely. “Everyone in the bat community and working on white-nose syndrome wants to know the answers here,” he said.

In the absence of caves and mines where bats typically hibernate and where the non-native Pd fungus thrives in the cold and damp, some bats on the islands are appropriating human structures such as basements and crawl spaces, where Pd may have a harder time taking hold. In addition, milder winters along the coast may allow infected bats that awaken from hibernation to feed periodically, rather than die from loss of fat stores and dehydration as is often the case with the disease.

We have identified one atypical hibernacula on each island so far, and all are in human structures: an unfinished basement on the Vineyard, and crawl spaces under houses on Long Island and Nantucket.

Each arm of the collaborative – BiodiversityWorks, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, and a group of researchers at the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and SUNY Albany – faces a different set of challenges in solving the puzzle, but northern long-eared bats have become a central part of our work throughout much of the year. We will remain in close communication as we continue our investigation through the winter and spring.

The study may finally clarify how the island populations have survived, and how people can protect them. The results could also inform bat management in other populations in the United States and Canada and help protect newly infected bat communities on the west coast, where similar environmental and evolutionary factors may be at play.

**Spring Recaptures Confirm Winter Survival**

New data collected this year confirm that northerns on the Vineyard are surviving the winter, bringing us a step closer to understanding how small numbers of this once abundant species has avoided the devastation of white-nose syndrome.

The four bats that we captured and swabbed in the spring (all were females) had healthy looking wings and normal body weights, despite all testing positive for the fungus, *Pseudogymnoscaps destructans* (Pd), that causes the disease and which they likely encountered during hibernation. Three were captured at Cranberry Acres in Vineyard Haven and the other at Major’s Cove in Edgartown. Two of the females were also recaptures from previous years, proving their over-winter survival. One was recaptured 150 yards from the maternity colony where we banded her in 2015, and the other at the maternity colony where we banded her in 2017.

Seventy percent of the northerns captured last year on Long Island also tested positive for Pd, but their fungal loads were not as high as documented on the mainland. None of the northerns captured on Nantucket tested positive.

Bats typically emerge from hibernation in early spring and begin feeding, which means their immune systems are awake and can work to fend off the disease. In addition, Pd can’t survive in the warm, dry places such as trees and trim boards where northerns tend to roost in the spring and summer.
Islandwide Survey Reveals New Sites with Rare Bats

With funding from the Edey Foundation, and in collaboration with Samantha Hoff, a researcher at SUNY Albany, we surveyed 75 locations across the Vineyard in the summer and fall using bat detectors. Samantha will use the data to help test whether northern long-eared occupancy increases with forest cover, patch size or connectivity; and to compare how occupancy varies between summer and fall, and among islands. These surveys identified new sites that may have summer maternity colonies, and data from the fall helped us locate a new netting site in Chilmark.

Travels with G1

On a cloudy October morning in Chilmark, Liz Baldwin unfolded a metal antenna, plugged it into a receiver and turned up the volume. Five days earlier, BiodiversityWorks staff had captured a northern long-eared bat in the nearby woods, attached a tiny radio transmitter to his back with eyelash adhesive and had been tracking him to his daytime roosts since then. Now she was back to track his movements, but all that came through on the receiver was static. “Looks like we’re going to go on an adventure,” she said, turning in a circle with the antenna, a few steps from a large mimosa tree where the bat was observed roosting deep in a crack two days earlier.

Over the next several hours she traveled a network of roads and trails in search of G1 (G is for the Gantz property where we found him), but with no luck. The search resumed the next day, when the signal finally reappeared on Lambert’s Cove Road. It turned out G1 had traveled almost nine kilometers from the mimosa tree and found a new spot in a telephone pole less than a mile from the BiodiversityWorks office. That’s a big journey for a little bat to make in a night.

G1 stayed in the neighborhood for 11 days, shuffling between the telephone pole, the stove vent of a house across the street and a red maple tree. He stayed in the telephone pole for the next four days, even during warm evenings when he might have come out to feed, but his transmitter started acting up and we lost the signal on November 5. Our search continued for several days but with no luck. We believe the transmitter battery ran out of power.

Unfortunately, G1 did not lead us to a hibernaculum, but he wasn’t far from Simon Hickman’s basement (see page 2), where our acoustic detectors recently confirmed northerns have returned. Perhaps one of them is G1!

Bat photos and top photo this page by Claire Ganz
Maps by Samantha Hoff, SUNY Albany

Islandwide Survey Reveals New Sites with Rare Bats

With funding from the Edey Foundation, and in collaboration with Samantha Hoff, a researcher at SUNY Albany, we surveyed 75 locations across the Vineyard in the summer and fall using bat detectors. Samantha will use the data to help test whether northern long-eared occupancy increases with forest cover, patch size or connectivity; and to compare how occupancy varies between summer and fall, and among islands. These surveys identified new sites that may have summer maternity colonies, and data from the fall helped us locate a new netting site in Chilmark.

Travels with G1

On a cloudy October morning in Chilmark, Liz Baldwin unfolded a metal antenna, plugged it into a receiver and turned up the volume. Five days earlier, BiodiversityWorks staff had captured a northern long-eared bat in the nearby woods, attached a tiny radio transmitter to his back with eyelash adhesive and had been tracking him to his daytime roosts since then. Now she was back to track his movements, but all that came through on the receiver was static. “Looks like we’re going to go on an adventure,” she said, turning in a circle with the antenna, a few steps from a large mimosa tree where the bat was observed roosting deep in a crack two days earlier.

Over the next several hours she traveled a network of roads and trails in search of G1 (G is for the Gantz property where we found him), but with no luck. The search resumed the next day, when the signal finally reappeared on Lambert’s Cove Road. It turned out G1 had traveled almost nine kilometers from the mimosa tree and found a new spot in a telephone pole less than a mile from the BiodiversityWorks office. That’s a big journey for a little bat to make in a night.

G1 stayed in the neighborhood for 11 days, shuffling between the telephone pole, the stove vent of a house across the street and a red maple tree. He stayed in the telephone pole for the next four days, even during warm evenings when he might have come out to feed, but his transmitter started acting up and we lost the signal on November 5. Our search continued for several days but with no luck. We believe the transmitter battery ran out of power.

Unfortunately, G1 did not lead us to a hibernaculum, but he wasn’t far from Simon Hickman’s basement (see page 2), where our acoustic detectors recently confirmed northerns have returned. Perhaps one of them is G1!

Bat photos and top photo this page by Claire Ganz
Maps by Samantha Hoff, SUNY Albany
Above all, BiodiversityWorks strives to generate a passion for Island wildlife and habitats, among the people who live, work and vacation here. Each summer, we make a long-term commitment to inspire and support young adults through our mentoring program, teaching them critical thinking skills and providing hands-on learning in field biology and endangered species conservation. This year, our mentoring program hosted one early-career shorebird biologist, two college students and four high school interns.

Students and seasonal staff got to know many of the moths, turtles, mammals, butterflies and other organisms that inhabit the Island, through time spent afield with our staff and guest mentors.

Wildlife Assistant Teddy Bettencourt (University of Michigan ‘19) and Wildlife Intern Eva Gildea (Harvard College ‘21) worked on independent projects, with Teddy focusing on rare bat acoustic surveys and Eva on outreach to reduce dog disturbance to beach-nesting birds. They also assisted our Shorebird Biologist, Kayla Smith, with beach-nesting bird conservation around the Island, and assisted Liz Baldwin with our black racer project.

Wildlife Interns Max Massick (The Collegiate School ‘20), Ingrid Moore (Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School ‘21), Angelina Pil (Rye Country Day School ‘21) and Victoria Scott (MVRHS ‘19) saw science and ecology in action throughout the program. Working with staff biologists Liz Baldwin, Luanne Johnson and Kayla Smith during Wildlife Wednesdays, interns learned about beach-nesting bird conservation, used radio telemetry for tracking snakes, and took part in nighttime mist-netting as part of our research into northern long-eared bats.

Guest mentor Paul Goldstein of the Smithsonian Institute and U.S. Department of Agriculture shed light on moth identification, while Island naturalist Gus BenDavid introduced the interns to herpetology and falconry. Students also studied butterflies with naturalist Allan Keith and learned botany with Margaret Curtin.

Interns picked through barn owl pellets to identify the skulls of prey species, learned to handle a milk snake we found under a snake board with Luanne, conducted river herring habitat assessments at James Pond, learned about biology internships and career opportunities with former BiodiversityWorks wildlife assistants Sammi Chaves and Oscar Thompson, and much more.

For our August field trip, we met up with Brad Winn and Alan Kneidel of Manomet, who shared their knowledge of arctic shorebird and whimbrel migration. Trevor Lloyd-Evans and Evan Dalton then offered some fascinating insight into songbird migration, gleaned from more than 40 years of mist-net capture data at Manomet. We also visited ecologist Christopher Neill of the Woods Hole Research Center, who showed us around the ongoing Coonamessett River restoration site in Falmouth.

Interns and Seasonal Staff Reflect on a Busy Summer

Right to left: Entomologist Paul Goldstein sheds light on moth identification; interns and seasonal staff explore the Coonamessett River; Teddy Bettencourt meets Gus BenDavid’s snapping turtle
Every year, we ask our interns and seasonal staff to reflect on their summer experiences: what they enjoyed most, what has stuck with them so far, and how the experience helped them think about their education and future careers. Here are some highlights from 2018.

Teddy Bettencourt

The experience as a whole was so beneficial in giving me the chance to explore multiple paths. I realized that I truly love conservation work. In particular, I was able to take away that I really love focusing on endangered species. While I still do not know what I want to do ultimately, this mentorship program really made me realize my passions for wildlife conservation and protecting the world’s natural ecosystems.

Eva Gildea

I have thought about BiodiversityWorks a lot! Particularly since returning to college, a lot of my classwork is theoretical (writing papers or completing problem sets) rather than hands-on. I have enjoyed telling people about my experience, as it was very different than the traditional summer job, and about the importance of wildlife biology (and) conservation. Recently, I decided my major, which is going to be Environmental Science and Public Policy. I feel like my experience at BWorks this summer has given me a great foundation to think about whether I want to work in conservation or some other area of environmental protection.

Max Massick

Aside from the fact that your work is of the utmost importance, the way you structure this opportunity is very effective. Doing both one-off learning experiences and assisting summer-long projects provides a nice balance. Having it only one day of the week helps greatly in bringing in people who are interested and devoted but not already certain that biology is their path. That helps potential biologists decide if the field is right for them, which is more valuable than reassuring people who already know they love biology.

Ingrid Moore

I most enjoyed tracking the black racers, and visiting Gus BenDavid’s house, and mist netting for bats. I loved tracking the snakes because it was something that I was interested in and I made a lot of memories. I liked going to Gus BenDavid’s house because there were a lot of cool animals I got to see. I loved going netting for bats because it was such an amazing and interesting experience; I also learned a lot more about the bats that live on the Island.

Victoria Scott

Throughout the program I most enjoyed getting to track the tagged black racer snakes and meeting with the landowners. As this was my second summer as a BWorks intern, I was especially eager to get the opportunity to see the black racers in action. Getting to see the snakes for myself allowed me to really appreciate what special creatures they are, and meeting with the landowners gave me insight into how to communicate with the public about field biology.

Kayla Smith

One of the most important things that the program did was to introduce me to conservation topics that I don’t think I would have pursued on my own. I’ve always maintained that I am a “birder,” but the black racer and bat projects have brought me closer to Island wildlife that I have never had any real connection with before.
Our study of black racer snakes on the Vineyard has confirmed the species’ range and habitat, along with the critical importance of natural corridors where snakes can travel to and from their overwintering grounds. The four-year study has established a baseline for further investigation, and helped raise awareness of this rare Island species.

With two more successful captures this year, we have reached our initial goal of tracking three or four black racers on different parts of the Island, and documenting their habitat use and movements throughout the year. BiodiversityWorks assistant director Liz Baldwin said the study has depended largely on private landowners who have allowed access to their properties. “I think we have increased the profile of snakes on the Island,” she said, adding that many residents have been supportive of the study.

We began gathering information about sightings and then monitoring hot spots around the Island in 2015, capturing our first racer, Audrey, at the Long Point Wildlife Refuge in West Tisbury the following year. The study continued in 2017 with Katama, a black racer named after her sandplain grassland habitat; and this year with Scooter and Liatris, captured at the Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation’s Stonewall Pond Meadow in June, and along Katama Bay in August, respectively.

Black racers have declined on the Island since the 1970s, due mostly to habitat loss and fatal encounters with vehicles. But prior to our study, most of what we knew about the species was anecdotal. Among our findings since 2015, a public mapping tool on our website, where people can report their sightings, suggests that black racers live exclusively along the south shore, between Chappaquiddick and Aquinnah, which consists largely of early successional habitat and the oak and pine woodlands and barrens that support a wealth of native species. We have yet to hear any reports of black racers farther north, including in Oak Bluffs, where some Islanders recall capturing them long ago.

We discovered that black racers on the Island are traveling surprising distances between their summer and winter ranges. Scooter, for example, spent part of July at Stonewall Beach, including under some stones in a patch of beach grass, then disappeared until we found him again a mile away near Blacksmith Valley, where he spent the rest of the summer. Getting there meant navigating several major obstacles in the landscape, including Stonewall Pond, a rocky beach and Squibnocket Road.

“We just thought they were two separate populations,” Liz said of the racers we have spotted at Squibnocket and the Stonewall Pond area. “But the fact that they are intermingling is pretty cool.” It also points to the importance of the native lawns and shrublands on private property that allowed Scooter to make the journey without being snatched up by a hawk or crushed by a vehicle.

Blacksmith Valley residents were as welcoming as those at Stonewall Pond, with one resident even sending out a mass email upon Scooter’s and BiodiversityWorks’ arrival in the area. “I feel like everyone in the neighborhood knew what was going on and was excited to have him around,” Liz said.

We captured Liatris, named after a wildflower that blooms in late summer, along Katama Bay at Betsy and Jesse Fink’s property in August. Liatris made some long-distance movements as well, from Sheriffs Meadow’s Huckleberry Barrens to a home off Smith’s Way, where she took to resting under a set of brick steps. The area may be where Liatris chooses to hibernate for the winter.

Along with our regular outreach efforts, we received funding from the Rotary Club of Martha’s Vineyard and the Permanent Endowment for Martha’s Vineyard to print information cards about these harmless snakes in both English and Portuguese. Liatris hasn’t traveled as far as Scooter, but we are curious to see if she departs her territory at Katama Bay in the spring to venture west into the area around the Katama Airfield, where we tracked Katama last year. (Unfortunately, Katama did not emerge from hibernation this spring, and her transmitter died before we could determine her fate.) Scooter is currently holed up in an old well in the Blacksmith Valley area. We will be watching both snakes to see where they hibernate this winter and move to in the spring. We then plan to re-capture Scooter in June and Liatris in July, remove their radio transmitters and send them on their way.
Maps showing Liatris’s home range along Katama Bay, and Scooter’s at Stonewall Pond and farther west. The blue triangles indicate potential hibernation sites.

Above (left to right): Scooter in September; the Jaffe family says hello to Scooter before releasing him
Bottom (left to right): Audrey, Katama, Scooter, Liatris
BiodiversityWorks monitors 14 beaches across the Island throughout the spring and summer to keep tabs on the piping plovers, American oystercatchers, least and common terns, and black skimmers that nest on the Island. It is a key part of our mission that wouldn’t be possible without the cooperation of many private landowners, and the dedication of interns and volunteers who believe in biodiversity conservation.

Once the birds lay their eggs, staff and volunteers visit three times a week until the chicks fledge almost two months later. We also educate the public about how to “Share the Shore” so that people and birds can co-exist on our beaches. To train the beach-bird monitoring staff, we partner with The Trustees on a spring training program that also benefits staff members at Martha’s Vineyard Land Bank and Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation.

The 2018 nesting season was a mixed bag at our monitoring sites. Some beaches had excellent productivity, while others suffered from high rates of egg or chick predation, or nests that were lost to king tides just prior to hatching. One success story this year involved a pair of piping plovers that nested and fledged three chicks at the Edgartown Lighthouse. The chicks hatched 10 days before the Fourth of July fireworks, but survived the festivities, thanks to the cooperation of the town of Edgartown; and to Kayla Smith, Teddy Bettencourt and Charles Smith, who watched over the family during the fireworks. Volunteers also arrived early the next morning to remove any debris that would attract chick predators like crows and gulls.

A gang of four crows that had been eating up to 90 percent of the plover chicks at Dogfish Bar in recent years managed to eat the first brood of chicks hatched at the site this year. But we finally captured and removed the problem crows, and the next four broods all survived! In the end, five pairs of plovers fledged 10 chicks at this site in Aquinnah.

Little Beach, at Eel Pond in Edgartown, continues to be a stronghold of prime nesting and feeding habitat for beach-nesting birds, and draws many bird watchers who come to admire them and escape the hubbub of downtown Edgartown in the summer.

Thanks to the Edey Foundation, The Daniels Wildlife Trust, and the Fink Family Foundation for supporting our Beach-Nesting Bird Conservation Program.
# Beach-Nesting Bird Update

(Sites Monitored by BiodiversityWorks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>PIPL Pairs Nesting</th>
<th>PIPL Chicks Fledged</th>
<th>AMOY Pairs Nesting</th>
<th>AMOY Chicks Fledged</th>
<th>Tern Pairs Nesting</th>
<th>Tern Colony Productivity</th>
<th>BLSK Pairs Nesting</th>
<th>BLSK Chicks Fledged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edgartown Lighthouse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 LETE</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Beach/Eel Pond</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>192 LETE 8 COTE</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgartown Great Pond</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56 LETE</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyster/Watcha</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60 LETE</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Point Pond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilmark Pond</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22 LETE</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Vincent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squibnocket</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogfish Bar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 LETE</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul’s Point</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Tashmoo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 LETE</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb’s Pond, Chappy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonewall Pond</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 LETE</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>31 pairs</td>
<td>30 chicks fledged</td>
<td>13 pairs</td>
<td>8 chicks fledged</td>
<td>368 LETE 8 COTE</td>
<td>Good to Poor</td>
<td>5 pairs</td>
<td>9 chicks fledged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Martha’s Vineyard Islandwide 2018 Nesting Season Summary (Preliminary):

58 pairs of piping plovers fledged 50 chicks (0.89 chicks/pair), which is 9 more breeding pairs and 13 more chicks fledged than in 2017. 47 pairs of American oystercatchers fledged 39 chicks (0.83 chicks/pair), which was at the high end of the statewide average. 721 pairs of Least terns nested at 19 sites, with The Trustees at Norton Point hosting the largest colony of almost 300 pairs. 55 pairs of common terns nested at 7 sites, with MassAudubon at Felix Neck hosting the largest colony of 32 pairs, on Haystack island in Sengekontaket Pond. No roseate terns nested on Martha’s Vineyard this year. 12 pairs of black skimmers produced at least 20 fledglings at Norton Point and Little Beach.
Sharing the Shore

It’s hard to imagine how your sweet dog could be seen as a vicious predator, but all dogs are a threat to beach-nesting birds. Parent birds will even leave their eggs or chicks to try and lead a dog away, or swoop and dive to deter it.

We set up new signs on Island beaches in the spring to raise awareness among dog walkers who care about birds and dogs but hadn’t realized their dogs were causing the birds distress. We encountered many owners who thought that because their dog didn’t chase birds that it was not causing any harm. However, when the birds leave their chicks to rush out and distract a dog, the chicks are vulnerable to avian predators, such as crows and gulls that wait for an opening to swoosh in and grab them. Repeated dog disturbance can also prolong incubation by cooling eggs and slow chick growth by reducing their feeding time. Please help us share this message with dog owners who bring their dogs to the beach in the summer.

We plan to continue our outreach to dog owners in 2019. We are grateful to the Daniels Wildlife Trust and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for grant funding that has paid for the signs, and to Jim Verhagen and Michelle Stantial of The Little Egg Foundation for sharing their cartoon shorebird graphics and design skills.
With the holiday season comes the venerable Martha’s Vineyard Christmas Bird Count, where 13 teams of enthusiastic birders comb the Island for species both common and rare. The 59th annual count will be on Saturday, January 5, from sunrise to sunset. If you would like to participate, email Luanne, the coordinator, at mvbirdcount@gmail.com.

Last year’s teams spotted 121 species on Count Day (Dec. 29), plus another four subspecies or hybrids; and eight species in Count Week (the three days preceding and following Count Day). Highlights included an immature bald eagle, 19 screech owls, 22 great blue herons, 28 hermit thrush and a pacific loon. We also tallied 12 northern bobwhites, whose breeding pairs have all but disappeared in the Northeast. Notably absent were dovekie, Virginia rail, American bittern, American woodcock and ring-necked pheasant, which we hope will return to the list in January.

The Junior Bird Count this year has been moved to March 30 in the hope that more young birders will participate. Look for details in local papers and the BiodiversityWorks eNews.

The Vineyard is among a growing number of communities throughout North America that have joined the Audubon Society’s annual Christmas Bird Counts, which began in 1900. For the eighth straight year (and despite the inclement weather along the Atlantic coast), last year’s outing broke a record, with 2,536 organized counts that were submitted to the Audubon database.

Researchers have long benefitted from the Christmas Bird Count data, which shows trends over time for each species. In a big step forward for birders and researchers alike, Audubon is finalizing a visualization tool that will allow anyone to view the trend data online. Audubon hopes the new system will be up and running shortly after this year’s count.

Thank You to All Our Volunteers in 2018!

Garrett Alberghi  
Terry Appenzellar  
Clara Athern  
Jeff Bernier  
Grazina Biskis  
Sharon Britton  
Brianna Brown  
Kendra Buresch  
Emme Carroll  
Oona Carroll  
Sammi Chaves  
Margaret Curtin  
Dave Dandridge  
Mary Davis  
Alysa Emden  
David Faber  
Eva Faber  
Brian Foster  
Justen Foster  
Pete Gilmore  
Tekomah Goggins  
Ursula Goodenough  
Max Gryksa  
Kenny Handy  
Sara Hoffmann  
Emily Houser  
Jeremy Houser  
Julie Jaffe  
Michelle Jasny  
Lanny McDowell  
Jack Nixon  
Jesse Olson  
Megan Ottens-Sargent  
Greg Palermo  
Chris Parsons  
Sharon Pearson  
John Pearson  
Ric (Richard) Saar  
Anna Sargent  
Charles Smith  
Scott Stephens  
Keren Toonensen  
Penny Uhlenendorf  
Dave Wartner  
Ulrike Wartner  
Jamie Wasserloos  
Nancy Weaver  
Soo Whiting
Thank you to these foundations, individuals and businesses for their donations between Jan. 1 and Dec. 7, 2018

**Grants**
Anonymous – Operating expenses
Edey Foundation
Fink Family Foundation
Caldwell-Fisher Charitable Foundation
George and Doris Daniels Wildlife Trust
Permanent Endowment Fund for MV
USFWS, Buzzard’s Bay Oil Spill Restoration Fund

**Business and Organization Contributions**
Amazon Smile
Amity Island Running Club
ArtCliff Diner
AutoEuropa
Cronig's Market
Hanschka Fine Metalwork
Kristen Reimann Landscape Architect
Mone Insurance
MV Tech
MV Wine & Spirits
Our Market
SBS Grain Store
The Kitchen Porch
The Net Result
The Scottish Bakehouse
USB Financial
Vineyard Tax Matters

**Individual and Family Contributions**
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Warren Adams
Lindsay and Blake Allison
Josephine Angevin
Terry Appenzellar and John Caldwell
Jesse Ausubel
Elizabeth Baldwin
Polly Bassett
Augustus D. BenDavid
Carroll Biesecker
Michelle Borre and Robert Massick
Joseph Bower
William Bridwell
Emily E. Bridwell
Geraldine Brooks and Tony Horwitz
Catherine Buck
Wendi and Ken Buessler
Ann R. Burt
Amy Cabaniss
Pamela Campe
Michael Chalfin and Sharon Jacobs
Carolyn Champ
Samantha Chaves
Toni Chute and John O’Keefe
Allan Cole and Alexandra Thompson-Cole
Patricia Correia
Nancy B. Cox
Nedine Cunningham
David Damroth
Nevenka Kovacevich Daniels
Cornelia Dean
Craig and Alysa Emden
Charles de Geoffroy
David Faber
Eva Faber
Brad and Anne Fligor
Douglas Forbes
Karyn Franzen
Myron and Cathy Garfinkle
Carlene Gilling
Judith Gilbert
Cathi and Maurice Gilmore
Scotty Goldin
April and Hap Hamel
Rebecca Harris
Peter and Karen Harrity
Andrea and George Hartman
Sarah and Fergus Henderson
Anne Henly
The Hesperia Fund
Simon Hickman
Sara Hoffmann
Arthur Howe
Howells Family Fund
Shay Howlin and Jeff Gruver
Luanne Johnson
Courtney Jones
Gerald and Linda Jones
Mal (Kenneth) Jones and Carol Koury-Jones
Rick Karney
Geoffrey Kontje and Norma Costain
John Kramer
Marjorie Lau
Caroline and Bob Maruska
Robert and Erica Mason
Brian and Anne Mazar
Kristine McDonald and Michael Jampel
Bob and Doreen Morse
Melani Nardone
Danielle O’Dell
Jesse Olson
Lorain S. Olsen
Megan Ottens-Sargent
John Patrick and Sharon Britton
Sharon and John Pearson
Nick Petz
Tracy Pheneger
Angelina Pil
Harriet Potter
Laurence Pringle
Emily Reddington and Marty Harris
Molly and Chris Reed
Jonathan Reichard
John and Diane Riley
Don and Kathy Robertson
Ellen and Jim Rogers
George Rogers and Sheryl Roth Rogers
Ted and Connie Roosevelt
Marc Rosenbaum
Peter and Gwen Rukeyser
Robert and Leah Rukeyser
Jane Seagave and John Kennedy
Paul Schlemmer
Lynda and Charles Simon
Charles and Brenda Smith
Michelle Stantial
Nancy K. Strauss
Penelope Uhlendorf and Scott Stephens
Saskia Vanderhoop
Alison Van Dyk
Ann and David Vaughan
Susanna von Oettingen
Suzanne Warren
Susan Wasserman
Nancy Weaver and David Dandridge
Marsha Winsryg

**Gifts in Memory of:**
Miriam and Wallace Baker (Ann Baker)
Brian Byrne (Art Cliff Diner)
Bob and Barbara Day (Norma Costain)
Edward Faber (David Faber)
Flip Harrington (Soo Whiting)
Gordon Thorne (Robert, Bruce, Roger Smith and Nancy Linzmeyer)

**Gifts in Honor of:**
Daniel (Fin) Kaeka (Polly Bassett)
Bob Woodruff (Michelle Borre and Bob Massick)
Prudence Burt (Ann R. Burt)

**Public Speaking Engagements:**
Falmouth 300
Harwich Conservation Trust
Polly Hill Arboretum
Thank you for helping to fund our 2019 wildlife and mentoring programs!

Our Year-End Appeal goal is **$60,000 by December 31**, and as of December 7, we’ve raised $46,469. This annual appeal provides vital support for BiodiversityWorks in the coming year.

In 2019, you can look forward to more news on the Island’s bats, black racers, and beach-nesting birds, as well as a new projects. We will continue training volunteers and mentoring young adults, who will work alongside us in the field.

Conservation lands aren’t enough habitat for diverse Vineyard wildlife species to survive into the future. Through our projects and programs, more private landowners will understand how their land provides connectivity between conservation areas, or a hibernation or nesting site that isn't available elsewhere. They will understand that their land is important to wildlife and how to coexist. We want to make wildlife and habitat conservation part of important Island decisions wherever people, land and wildlife intersect, but we need your support.

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed thus far, and to those who gave earlier in the year.

If you haven’t made your annual gift, please visit our website to give online at www.biodiversityworksmv.org.

We accept gifts of stock and matching gifts from employers too! If you have questions, call us at (800) 690-0993 ext. 0.

---

**BWorks Welcomes Kayla Smith**

We are excited to announce that Kayla Smith has joined our year-round staff. In her Wildlife Biologist duties, Kayla will focus primarily on our beach-nesting bird program, but will also assist with our other projects in the fall and winter. Kayla graduated from the University of New Hampshire in 2014 with a degree in Environmental Conservation Studies. Since then, she has been researching and monitoring a variety of birds, including snowy plovers and red-cockaded woodpeckers in Florida, and Hudsonian godwits in Alaska. She will expand our year-round capacity to ensure that we continue to benefit the Island’s rich and fragile ecology.

We’re grateful to Betsy and Jesse Fink, and the Fink Family Foundation, for their three-year pledge in support of this staff expansion to build our capacity for beach-nesting bird protection across the Island.