

**GREAT GULL ISLAND
PROJECT
50 SEASONS**



1969~2018

THE WORD QUICKLY SPREAD...



Photo by Matthew Male

THE GREAT, GREAT GULL ISLAND
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

SAVE THE DATE:

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

ON GREAT GULL ISLAND!

COME FOR THE DAY OR SPEND THE WEEKEND... SEE OLD FRIENDS AND
MAKE NEW ONES!

MORE DETAILS WILL FOLLOW DURING THE SUMMER.
I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

CHEERS,
HELEN



Photo by Matthew Male

By the end of August, the crew was set. Matthew started up the tractor and reestablished the main paths on both the Eastern and Western ends of the island overgrown with vegetation. Then he started to build benches. Joan joined us with her whiteboard and organization skills. Helen, Joe, Ann, Doug and Dale started to transform the island and get it ready for the celebration. Wood was carried up from the dock for making benches and painting. Joan and Doug even cleaned out the ground blind! Even the kitchen got a facelift. Joe installed newly ordered plaques on many of the blinds.

Lydia was carefully keeping daily track and updating the RSVPs from the office at AMNH. At final count, the guest list included 100 Gull Islanders, past and present, returning to the island. Some were coming all the way from Hawaii and Florida. All the details were thoroughly organized~including the daily boat schedule.... Rooms were assigned and guests were encouraged to bring tents and sleeping bags. A weekend Pea- pod list was organized.

Then along came FLORENCE...









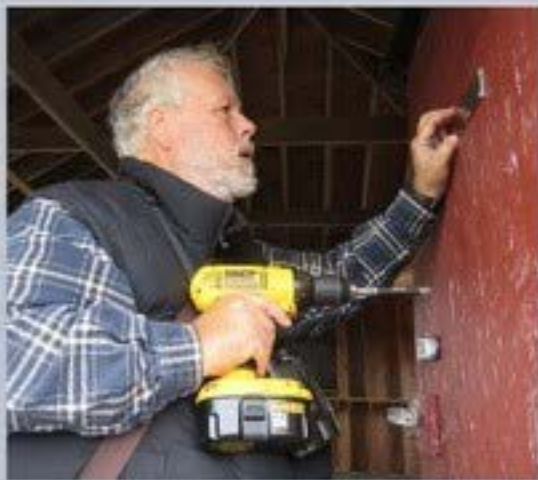










Photo by Matthew Male



As Hurricane Florence came close to shore, it threatened the Carolina coast as a Cat 4. Some of its effects, however, were felt on Great Gull Island. The swells around the dock were high and the boat landings became more difficult. It soon became clear that the celebration had to be moved to the mainland.







Luckily, Matthew Male had made alternative reservations at the Chester Meeting House for Saturday, September 15, 2018. Party guests were sent an email, more telephone calls were made, boat trips were canceled. Ann and Joe stayed on the island and the party planners, Helen, Joan, Doug, Dale and Matthew moved off island. Matthew and Doug and Joan went home while Helen and Dale set up headquarters at the Quality Inn in Old Saybrook.

Joan joined us at the Inn on Thursday with supplies and a surprise banner, painted by David Sibley! It was also a shopping day. Joan and Dale went to the Big Y to order a picture cake and pick up food and paper goods. Helen worked on the guest list and prepared notes for the celebration.



On Friday, David Duffy flew in from Hawaii, Margaret Rubega also joined us, and Doug returned from NY. We started to set up the room. Final touches were painted on the banner, and pizza and salad were ordered.

On Saturday morning, we made a side trip to see some Common Terns and take a look at Little Gull Light. Then the work began in earnest. Hors d'oeuvres were prepared, flowers arranged and the pizza, salad and cake were picked up. The banner was hung and lights and sound were checked. The TV monitors were set and tested. The Meeting House, already an historic landmark, was taking on a festive look and Gull Island was coming to Chester!

Photo by Lydia Thomas

Order of Battle

3:00 Arrive, get Nametags
Hors D'oeuvres
3:45 Photo Shoot
4:00 Pizza & Salad arrive
5:00 More Pizza arrives
5:30 Champagne Toast
& Testimonials
6:45 Coffee & Dessert



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Photo by Lydia Thomas









Testimonials





"For me,
Great Gull Island
is the closest place to
heaven on earth..."

Bear Fox

"When a tern is flying, I don't care
where you are, this woman
probably had something to do with
that bird."

Joan Walsh



" Many of you who were at Gull Island in the 60s and early 70s may remember the condition of Deathtrap. It really was a deathtrap! Floors and ceilings were barely in place.

I got to do my first job jacking up the floor of one of the blinds. Helen said, "Can you build more?" The building has not stopped in 40 years.

There's not a day that goes by where I do not think about Gull Island.

We all came together at Gull Island and made it like it is. Helen has helped us get there."

Matthew Male



"Many kisses and love! I went out on a fabulous weekend which is world renowned among Gull Islanders. I got to go out in the spring of '96. This was a legendary weekend as we netted 93 species. It was Bird-A-Thon and I was hooked! I kept coming back ever since.

This is Helen's day! What a mentor you have been to me. The older I get, the more I appreciate it. I was in and out of jobs at the time and I have always felt that no matter what I did on Gull Island, it was always appreciated. Thank you Helen."

Melissa McClure





"I work for the Natural History Museum in Fundraising and I love this about Helen. A gentleman lived on Fisher's Island and his son volunteered for a week on Great Gull Island. He told his father that it was very cold and they slept in pill boxes. This gentleman came into the Museum and asked at the information desk to see "the gull lady." He ended up in Helen's office. He said, "I understand the housing for volunteers is pretty rough out there~could you use \$15,000 to help fix up the living quarters?" She said, "Yes, but I wouldn't use it for that." He said, "What would you use it for?" She replied, "I need to improve my computers to keep track of the data and the birds going to South America. He said, "the \$15,000 is yours!"

Sidney Whalen

"When I was in college, I was taking a Utopia class and had to write a paper. I thought about Gull Island and said to the professor, "Who needs the government? The director of Great Gull Island is a woman who IS the government." My professor suggested that I write about her.

So I did~"Great Gull Island, Utopia!"

Jill Hamilton



"Helen is a mentor above all other mentors. She has touched everyone who has been to the island and has changed them in ways they never thought possible. She has opened up worlds. She's made the world a better place. She has created a family among us all.

From 50 years to 50 more!"

Anne Rubega



"Helen, you are genuinely a treasure. Everyone who crosses paths with you thinks the same way. From the moment Helen meets a stranger, she makes them feel welcome and takes the time to get to know them. As a bird photographer, I feel anchored to the island because of the people, the friendships and Helen, my mentor."

Ann Pacheco



I don't know about you, but if its raining when I wake up on a work day, I can't escape the feeling that I should be able to skip work and sleep in. (Sometimes I do) I get this strange longing for band-stringing and data entry.

I wish I could be there to hear your tales, Helen. and all of your tales of her. Helen, you embody: grace in every circumstance, bottomless cheer, and relentless leadership. I say "relentless" because from GGI's dark-before-dawn to way past dusk, Helen endlessly volunteers to do the work that needs doing. But you also modeled a mirthful approach that helped mostly everyone else figure out how to volunteer to do the same. From dawn to dusk~ across 6,000 dawns and dusks~of the last 50 seasons.

Memories of so many of you fill my mind. But it's the Island that haunts every corner of my soul.

I hope the next 50 years of the island's future protect the place in ways it can continue to create special memories for thousands of new volunteers and visitors.

Cheers to you all."

Tim Male



Olivia Male
reading
a letter from
her uncle,
Tim Male

"Like the first flight behind flockmates that teach young whooping cranes to migrate, 1977 brought my first journey to my future island summer range. The 15 GGI seasons that followed created an indelible longing to return ever since.

I can't walk a dew-filled suburban lawn and not recall the wet on old sneakers crossing the East End. I can't hear a tern~of any species~cry over Virginia's shore or Australia's Indian Ocean coast and not be brought back to the cacophony of the South Beach.

Smells always evoke the strongest memories for me~like bayberry and sumac. My kids can't understand why I love the smell of sumac. That's because they haven't spent enough time on the island to remember the joy of finishing chick check on The Top, and walking through the train track's route, full of the cloying smell of July sun~drenched sumac. Sumac is for-me just what late morning is supposed to smell like, especially coupled with longing for a too-late lunch.

The smell of an old book is Gull Island. Joe's cast-off science fiction novels, aged by mildew over a winter's abandonment. When I smell an old book, it's not a bookstore, but the Carpenter's shop that I see.

It's not just powerful memories.. Gull Island also changed my life's rhythms. I'm a morning person, I expect, because of Great Gull...and it is 5 am now as I write this. If a songbird in my yard starts singing at 4:30 am, it ends my slumber as surely as one of Talvi's song sparrows would do outside a Deathtrap window.



"Thank you~you have made a real difference in the world. There would not be Roseate Terns in the Northeast U.S. if it wasn't for your work."

Patrick Cummings

" I am Helen's younger brother. I have a unique perspective as I was able to observe her growing up foreshadowing what she's done today. She was always interested in road kills. She would bring them home and boil them separating meat from the bones. She was always popular. She was president of of her class. Helen has a real way with people. People like her. I am in awe of what she as done as a volunteer. To lead a group like you, and accomplish what she has accomplished, I am very impressed."

Jim Hays





"The Boiling Bones story reminded me about the first time I went to Great Gull Island. There were a half-dozen dead Great Cormorants hanging in the tower and they stank like crazy. Helen was studying the bones....."

Michael Male

"I came out to Gull Island as a child and there is a picture on Helen's desk of me sitting on a rock and reaching out.... I returned to Gull Island as a 13 year old going out to work with no work experience. You taught me that you work not for yourself but for others around you."

Georgia Male





"Helen has been a fantastic mentor. She is ornery, obstinate and relentless. She never takes no for an answer in her life. Helen was not doing this for herself, she was doing it for the birds. When she makes a decision she is committed to it. We are all fueled by this and have to be fueled for the next 50 years.

In this present time everyone can take away Helen's sterling example. It doesn't matter how high the wind is~we are going to carry those blind sides out to the blinds! DO NOT TAKE NO for an answer. It is up to us.....That's what I take away from Helen Hays. There is nothing more valuable."

Margaret Rubega



Photo by
Nancy Perkins

"You are what you are because
of what's in you and what you
decided to do. That's true of
everybody who has come out to
help us and we've all benefitted
from that."

Helen Hays



Photo by: Chris Elphick



Photo by
Nancy Perkins

Great Gull Island Project
50 Seasons
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