

FOGGI



FRIENDS OF GREAT GULL ISLAND

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HELICOPTER MISSION

Helen Hays

Melinda Billings and I arrived at Jim and Barbara Sorensen's in Ledyard, Connecticut April 15 planning to spend the night there, then head for Great Gull Island to prepare for the Connecticut Air National Guard bringing 29,000 pounds of lumber to the island. The lumber was dedicated to expanding areas where Roseate Terns, an endangered species, would be able to nest by creating terraces and to build twenty blinds to observe the terraces as well as areas shared by Common and Roseate terns. We planned to have people on Great Gull Island as well as in Groton to help load and unload the lumber. The Air National Guard would carry the lumber by slings on pallets under a Chinook helicopter and fly it from Groton to Great Gull Island. Bob Kane, a Great Gull Island volunteer, calculated the weight of the different lengths of lumber and sent the total numbers of each length to the Air National Guard so they could calculate total weights for the multiple loads the helicopter would carry to move the 29,000 pounds of lumber.

Due to very windy weather we could not land on Great Gull Island April 16 and so returned to the Sorensen's, which became our command post for the next three days. We reached Great Gull Island April 18, the same day we received a contract from the Air National Guard which had to be signed by all parties in the agreement before the mission could proceed. By April 23 all signatures had been obtained and Major Ian Feyk called me at 3:00 pm to say the mission was on for Friday April 25!

I called Jeff Aldrich at Ring's End in Niantic who had been waiting for this moment since last fall. He directed Aaron Prior to pack the lumber and Alex Yatzook to deliver it to Groton, following the packing instructions they had received from the National Guard. When the lumber arrived the



Jeff Aldrich, Aaron Prior, Alex Yatzook

National Guard commented on how well it was packed and proceeded to put it on the pallets to be slung under the Chinook helicopter. Everything went smoothly and in the end the volunteers, waiting at the airport to help were not called upon, but we appreciated the fact they went to the Groton Airport to help if needed.



Juliana Barrett, Suzanne Paton

Suzanne Payton called me about 1:15 pm on April 25 from Groton to say the lumber would be on its way soon. She and Juliana Barrett both obtained grants that made it possible to fund the expansion of Roseate Tern nesting areas on Great Gull Island and they both were on hand at Groton to see the helicopter take off. Bud Bray, one of our new volunteers, called at 1:25 to say the helicopter with the lumber would take off in five minutes! At that point a black helicopter with a National Guard reporter, Jordan Werme, circled the island. At about 1:30 the Chinook helicopter carrying 130 2 X 12's flew in from the south around the eastern end of the island and landed the lumber in a section of the island we call Middle Earth, just east of the headquarters gun emplacement.



It did not take long for the helicopter crew to detach the lumber and the Chinook took off returning with a second load at 2:00 pm and a third and final load at 2:30 pm.

The weekend of May 2-4 Lottie Prushinski heard terns at 4:40 am the morning of May 3. We had not seen terns when we arrived on the island the afternoon of May 2. Over 1500 birds came in the morning of May 3 and over 2,000 on May 4. These were early dates for so many individuals and we really felt the terns were pushing us!

Work on the island May 3 began at 8:00 am. Bud Bray had recruited professional carpenters: John Einbellig, Mark Einbellig and Jay Sullivan who volunteered their skills to work on the blinds. In two days they framed 15 and finished one by putting a floor in it. Bud also recruited four strong young men to help with the heavy lifting: Charles J. Satti, Shane Batista, Glen Piette and Damian "Dame Dash". They started by lifting fifty of the 2X12's off the pallet in Middle Earth and setting them out along the south side of the island where we would use them for terracing. Each of the 2 X12's weighed 79 lbs. By 9:00 am, Matthew Male and



Lottie Prushinski





Bud Bray, Pam Clark

Rob Bareiss had started the tractor and Matthew moved the rest of the 2x12's to different terracing spots on the island. Volunteers moved about half the wood off two other pallets on Friday. On Saturday morning Boy Scout Troop 34 arrived and helped finish unloading the pallets, after they unloaded and stacked about a cord of wood for island use during the next two years. Charles Satti brought his saw and the power team cleared the backline to make it ready for terracing. Needless to say everyone was tired and ready to leave the island by Sunday.

On the weekend of May 9 – 11, we had a wonderful surprise,

Bud Bray arrived with Jay Sullivan the professional carpenter, who had volunteered the preceding weekend and



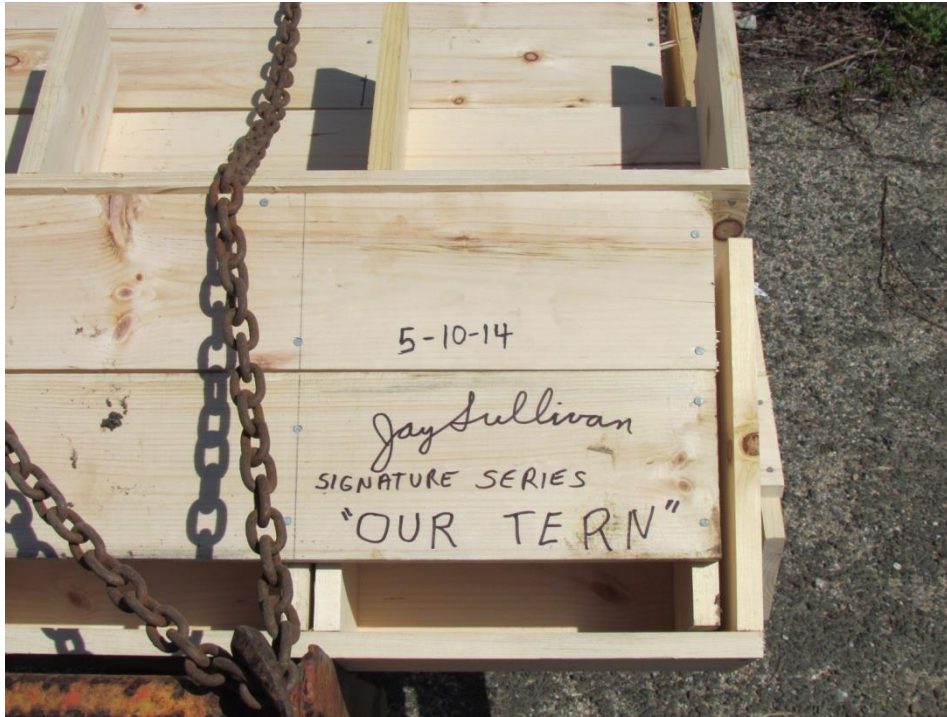


Charles Satti, Bud Bray, Pam Clark, Damian “Dame Dash”, Glen Piette, Shane Batista

volunteered this weekend to cut wood for the Roseate houses. Peter Paton made an unexpected visit and brought his student Kevin Rogers who will work on Great Gull later in the season. Jay cut



lumber for the Roseate houses all day and Peter and Kevin, with help from Bud, nailed the houses together. Jay signed the roof of the last Roseate shelter nailed together by Peter and Dave. Bob Kane then loaded the houses on the tractor and distributed them. Together Jay, Peter, Kevin and Bud produced 80 Roseate shelters each with 6-7 compartments. Keep your fingers crossed that the Roseate Terns are as enthusiastic about them as we are!



I thank all the people mentioned above for their hard work in putting the Roseate terracing project together. I thank Suzanne Paton and Juliana Barrett for grants to support the terracing project. In addition I thank Smidgie Macphail for visiting the Groton airport before the lumber was lifted off and getting some good pictures and also for visiting Ring's End and getting pictures. Judy Benson's articles in the New London Day were wonderful surprises and recently we have enjoyed Jordan Werme's article about the project and links to it. Many thanks to all of you who contributed your fine pictures for this article. They really make the article!





Judy Benson

We all thank the Connecticut Air National Guard for undertaking this conservation mission. Needless to say it would not have been possible without you. Major General Martin, the Adjutant General of the Connecticut National Guard made the decision to undertake the mission. Colonel Scott A. Panagrosso corresponded with Suzanne Paton and Major Ian J. Feyk, Flight Operations Officer, spoke a number of times with me between April 15 and April 25. You undertook an exciting mission for us and I will let you know how the Roseate Terns react to our combined efforts at the end of the summer. Thank you again!

Finally, heartfelt thanks from all of us to George Main and his great lobster boats for getting us to Great Gull Island and back in April and early May. George, you and your mates took very good care of us – no wet feet. Matty Poitras has rebuilt the old scow which had a hole in it in the spring. He has painted it and can't wait for everyone to see it.



George Main



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