

# Friends of Sears Island 2018 Annual Report

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[www.friendsofsearsisland.org](http://www.friendsofsearsisland.org)



*Children examine a monarch chrysalis during a butterfly tagging program.*



*Sears Island sunrise by Laurie Schweikert*



*Archaeology of Sears Island presentation with Paul Bock.*



*Nature journaling and observation program with Jenni Judkins.*

2018 was another banner year for FOSI, in both the number of programs we offered and the number of people we served. Over the course of the year, we delivered 27 programs with 861 participants, and for the first time we offered at least one program every month of the year. During these events, we witnessed so many moments of wonder and discovery, of community members connecting with one another and forming deeper ties with Sears Island.

We continued to offer a diverse array of programming, including the ever-popular yoga on the beach, sea kayaking, indoor winter talks at the Belfast Library, a variety of nature programs on-island, and seasonal celebrations. This year we also piloted Science Squad, our new place-based monthly after-school program for kids ages 6-12 and their families (read more about this program on page 2). We had our first full house at the Belfast Free Library in November, when archaeologist Paul Bock drew a record crowd of 80 people for his talk, "The Archaeology of Sears Island and the Upper Penobscot Bay." During that popular presentation, we filmed a program for the first time and were able to reach a much wider audience when we shared the video on social media and on community television in Belfast and Searsport. *(continued on page 2)*



## 2018 Highlights and Accomplishments

*(continued from page 1)*

We hope to do more of this in the future. This year we had an unprecedented turnout of 77 people at the two monarch butterfly tagging programs we offered on the island in September. We had many people volunteer to tag butterflies independently for us, allowing us to gather a significant amount of data to send to Monarch Watch, a volunteer, citizen science organization that studies and tracks the fall migration of the monarch butterfly.

Building on the positive public response we saw to last year's winter Solstice by the Sea, we offered our first summer solstice celebration this year, which drew a crowd of 185 people. The event included food trucks, picnicking, music from members of the Belfast Bay Fiddlers, poetry readings, a sun lantern processional, and dancing. Many people came dressed for a midsummer's eve, wearing flower crowns or fairy costumes. It was truly a magical evening to kick off the start of summer! Although weather foiled plans for our second winter solstice celebration, we were inspired by the overwhelming public interest shown in this event and look forward to trying again next year.

## Science Squad Update

We recently completed our first year of Science Squad, our new recurring monthly citizen science program for children. We finished out the year strong, having served 220 participants in 9 programs during the months school was in session. This fall we offered a monarch tagging workshop for families, an animal bones discovery workshop, and a nature journaling and observation program. Due to the positive feedback and high attendance numbers we've seen at these programs, we decided to continue offering this program in 2019 using some leftover funds from our Davis Conservation Foundation grant as seed money. However, we need additional funds to keep the program running for the entire year. This innovative program connects local youth with scientific mentors, and engages them as citizen scientists, explorers, and stewards of their local environment. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in supporting Science Squad, let us know!



*Science Squad participants during a monarch butterfly program on Sears Island (above) and at an animal bones discovery workshop (below).*



## FOSI Board & Advisors 2019

### Board of Directors

*President*

Susan K. White

*Vice President*

Rolf Olsen

*Secretary*

Janet Williams

*Treasurer*

Brian Callahan

Rob Burke

Sandi Cirillo

Patricia Gladding

Jay Holland

David Italiaander

Robert E. Ramsdell

Marietta Ramsdell, *Emeritus*

### Advisory Group

Steve Albin

Cloe Chunn

Judy Kaiser

Marjorie Knuuti

Bill Kulbe

Jill Kulbe

Tom Mullin



### Island News

Our trail crew continues to work tirelessly to maintain public access and make improvements to the conservation area on Sears Island. The crew regularly removes downed trees from the trails, weedwhacks to keep plants from encroaching on pathways, and removes garbage as needed. This year our trail volunteers also replaced vandalized signs and gate locks, took steps to control erosion along the banks to the island entrance, and reset a broken slab over the well at the Homestead site and covered it in wire mesh to keep small animals out of the well and discourage visitors from standing on it. Cow parsnip was also removed from the Homestead Trail.

The Blue Trail got some help this summer from interns in the Community Conservation Corps (CCC), a Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District program. The eroded trail head at the Tower Road was repaired, and this steep section was improved in terms of safety, access, and water flow. Students from Unity College also completed a volunteer work day on the island in August. The group worked to create drainage ditches along a section of the Tower Road where water was pooling up, and installed new bog bridging on the Blue Trail.

Two organized beach clean-ups were done by kids participating in Science Squad and students from the Maine Ocean School. We would like to thank everyone who volunteered their time to take care of the island this year!

**This year Jay Economy and Ann Flack are stepping down from the Advisory Group. We would like to thank them for their dedication and many years of service to FOSI!**

## FOSI Fundraisers in 2018

We had two dine-to-donate fundraiser events in 2018, at Nautilus and Harborwalk restaurants in downtown Belfast. FOSI would like to thank both businesses for their generous donations to support our education and conservation programs, as well as everyone who came out to dine. We would also like to thank the Grasshopper Shop in Searsport for hosting a shopping fundraiser for FOSI in November.

## Upcoming Fundraisers

Join us on Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> from 5-8pm for a dinner fundraiser at Delvino's Restaurant in Belfast! Ten percent of all sales that evening will be donated to FOSI's conservation and education programs. Thank you to Delvino's for graciously hosting this event.

## Thank You to Our Volunteers!

This year we recorded 1,582 hours of time donated by volunteers, with 48 people volunteering one time and 19 repeat volunteers. Thank you to all who shared their time and talents with FOSI; we couldn't fulfill our mission without your help!

## How to Get Involved

We are always looking for new volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. If you've been looking for a way to get more involved in your community and make new friends, we encourage you to consider attending one of our monthly board meetings or contacting Ashley at [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org) to find a volunteer opportunity that could work for you. We are currently seeking candidates for the board of directors and our advisory group, trail maintenance crew members, program leaders, grant writers, and volunteers to help with citizen science projects.

## Respecting the Island

Unfortunately, over the past year we've seen a sharp rise in vandalism on the island. Our signs have repeatedly been defaced or removed, areas of pavement and the porta-potty have been spray-painted, and our gate locks have been broken or stolen many times. FOSI relies on the hard work of volunteers to keep the conservation area accessible to the public for recreation and education. While we are working with the Searsport police and the town to resolve this issue, we ask that you please report any suspicious activity to the Searsport police immediately (207-548-2304).



*Brian Beal teaches clam biology.*



*Science Squad vernal pool study.*



*Maine Ocean School beach clean-up.*



*Monarch chrysalis on Sears Island.*

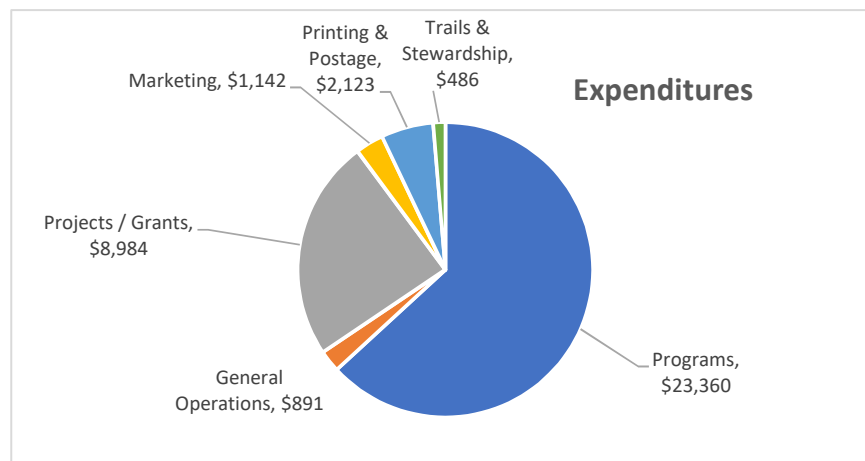
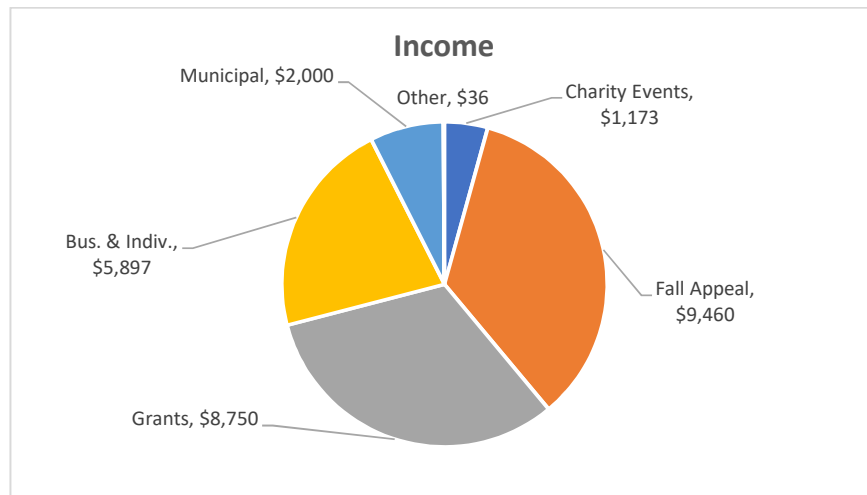
## FOSI Awarded Capacity-Building Grant by the National Environmental Education Foundation

In December, FOSI was awarded a grant for \$3,900 from the National Environmental Education Foundation. This grant will allow FOSI to contract Gary Friedmann & Associates of Bar Harbor, who will conduct several workshops with the FOSI board of directors and advisory group over the course of 2019 to develop and implement a comprehensive fundraising plan for the organization. With the help of this grant, we hope to improve our fundraising skills and build our capacity to ensure that our organization is financially sustainable well into the future.



*Clockwise from top left:* Sunset procession along the causeway during our summer Solstice by the Sea event, a boy searches for insects during our insect bioblitz in June, a group of sea kayakers get ready to explore the waters around Sears Island, children explore field guides and practice sketching during a nature observation and journaling program at the Belfast Free Library, yoga on the beach, and kids checking out a salamander found during a vernal pool study in spring.

## Friends of Sears Island Income and Expenditures 2018



**We want to sincerely thank all of our individual, business, and nonprofit organization members, as well as our dedicated volunteers. We couldn't do it without you!**