



The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

June, 2023 Issue 2

Announcing! Open House at Faulkner's Island Saturday, September 2

For the first time since 2007, the public will be able to visit Faulkner's Island and its historic lighthouse.

Come join the Faulkner's Light Brigade and co-sponsors, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Coast Guard, Saturday September 2, 2023 from 10am to 3pm (inclement weather date September 9th) to visit the island and tour the lighthouse.

You will need access to the island by private boat, as ferry service from the mainland will not be provided. There is an anchorage off the west side of the island where boats can anchor while you visit the island. A water taxi will be provided to transport visitors from the anchorage to and from the island. The Faulkner's Light Brigade has selected Thimble Island Cruise, LLC to provide the water taxi

service. This service will be available for a nominal fee. Due to space constraints, the Faulkner's Island dock will not be available for docking of private vessels.

We hope you will be able to join us for a great day at Faulkner's Island. Further details and important updates for the event will be available on our webpage at faulknerslight.com.

President's Note

Since the rebirth of the Faulkner's Light Brigade a year ago, it's been a privilege to be part of this terrific group of people. I would like to sincerely thank every member and volunteer for your continued interest and support.

The past year has been a challenge, but there have been numerous rewards. Most of our effort was concentrated on reconnecting with past members, welcoming new members, and being a resource for the public. All the while these efforts were integrated with our primary mission, the preservation of the Faulkner's Lighthouse and Island.

After clearing several hurdles, we were able to publish the first recreated edition of "The Octagon" last August. We mailed and distributed almost 1000 copies! Also for the first time it was published on our webpage. This publication has been a tremendous success and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

We also rebuilt the Faulkner's Light Brigade Webpage. While still a work in progress, it is outstanding! The webpage is a great resource. Whether you are interested in the history of Faulkner's, the environment of the island, the wildlife, or just want to browse, it's all there. You can also find archived back issues of The

Octagon on the webpage. I encourage you to have a look at www.faulknerslightbrigade.com.

This year is shaping up to be even more critical than last, and we have much on our plate to do. We continue to cohort with the USFWS and offer volunteer services wherever it's needed. Last year we were able to assist in maintaining the tern nesting areas, assembling and disassembling the docks, and help with building maintenance. While we are continuing our work in all these areas we are monitoring critical areas of the island for possible erosion. We have also identified areas of particular concern with the lighthouse, focusing on both short and long-term projects. We will be meeting with the USCG and partnering with them to begin the process of addressing the lighthouse needs.

It is with great anticipation that we will be hosting an Open House in early September this year. This is the first Open House since 2007. We are anticipating a great turnout. I hope you can be there.

In my travels I have recognized that most people are drawn to lighthouses. There seem to be a myriad of reasons for this interest. It could be the wonderment of how they consistently light, how are they powered, who manages or lived in them, how were they built, the effects of

the ravages of nature and the elements, or all of the above. They all seem to carry some mystique, and Faulkner's Light is no exception. My interest dates back several decades. I recall my first "encounter" with a lighthouse as a young boy. Now, several years later, my interest in these majestic structures has not waned and I don't have to travel far to see one, as Faulkner's stands right off the coast of Guilford. Our family reminisces of the several vacations or boat trips where a lighthouse was included in our travels. Faulkner's Light seems to be in the forefront of many of those memories, and that interest has now been passed on across multiple generations.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to all the authors and contributors to this edition of The Octagon. Thanks to the Board and all of the volunteers for their time and commitment to our mission. Special thanks to our editor Dr. KJ Lee and Graphic Designer Jeanne Grenier for their outstanding work and ongoing commitment towards creating this edition.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of "the Octagon". I again invite you to partner with me to "keep the light shining".

—Anthony J. Coppola, MD
President and Chairman

Lightkeeper Arthur J. Munzner of Faulkner's Island

By Joel Helander

Descendants of lightkeepers who served at the government light station at Faulkner's Island are numerous and live in all quarters of the United States. Often, they have stories to tell that have never been heard: stories that are colored with captivating human interest; stories filled with thrills and curiosity—even tragedy; and stories that capture the romance of island lightkeeping long ago.

Alas—the descendants of lightkeepers are not easily traced. Renewed interest in Faulkner's Island Light Station, fueled by the 2002 Bicentennial celebration, annual open houses, and other media attention has prompted a number of such descendants to come forward. More often than not, they find us rather than we find them.

Invariably, the descendants of lightkeepers share stories of experiences that point to some of the highest and happiest moments of their families' lives. Here is one of their stories.

Lawrence W. Munzner (1919–1981) of Miami, Florida was the son of Arthur J. Munzner (aka Minzner), who served as Assistant Keeper, May 1928–June 1929, and then as Head Keeper until 1935. A photo album from Lawrence's Estate made its way back to Guilford for safe-keeping. The black and white snapshots contain generous captions that serve to document life at the light station in the 1930s.

In 1930, Lawrence was 10 years old, living on the island as an only child with his parents, Mary and Arthur Munzner, who lived on the first floor of the big, 14-room dwelling house. A paint supply shed, built of brick, stood next to the brownstone tower. Two chicken coops with small enclosures were located north of the house and, beyond, was a long row of experimental racks erected by the American Brass Company to experiment with the effects of climate on paints applied to masonry. A flower and vegetable garden were located southeast of the house, with one caption referring to the "fertile land" found there. The boat basin, quaintly called the "bathing cove," featured an elementary wharf with timber cribbing filled with stones, leading up to the boat house that washed away in the Hurricane of 1938.

A lighter and barge, used for constructing the rip rap protection that still exists as the curving jetty, are shown in the album after they were wrecked in a storm (1933). Animal pets for the Munzner family included two dogs named Sport and Nellie, a litter of puppies, and a prized goat named Minnie. Not too unlike their lightkeeper predecessors, the Munznors entertained family and friends including Betty Jane and Al Kennedy, Dr. Martin, Cousin Alyce and Cousin June, Aunt Estelle and Uncle Pete, the Nilson family, the Roode family, and a young boy named George Gallows. Government officials visited often, too, including an "inspector," a "tinsmith," and a "mechanic".



Faulkner's Light Station as Keeper Arthur J Munzner knew it, circa 1930.



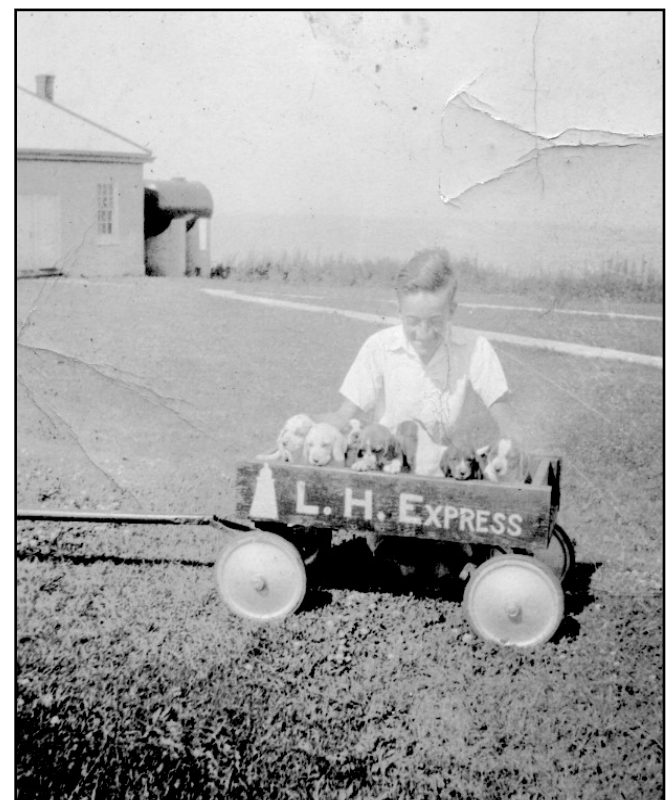
Keeper Arthur Munzner (standing with hat) poses in front of the “fog signal building” with sister-in-law Stella Jaserie, brother-in-law Pete Jaserie, son William (front left), niece June, and niece Alyce, circa 1930.



William Munzner invited his friend, George Gallows, for an island adventure, circa 1930.



Keeper and Mrs. Arthur Munzner (top step, middle) and Assistant Keeper Dan Burt (lower step, left) entertain government mechanics and a government inspector, circa 1930.



William Munzner’s pet island dog, Nellie, had puppies, circa 1930.

A Report of the Tern population on Faulkner's Island

By Deanna Broderick

In addition to its service as an active lighthouse Faulkner's Island is an important wildlife habitat and part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Every spring, terns fly from their winter homes in the south, Central America and South America to the Atlantic coast to raise their young. Faulkner's is home to the raucous Common Tern and the more demure Federally endangered Roseate Tern. There are other curious birds that return to the island in the spring to raise their young. The beaky American oyster catcher, American black ducks, Willets, Carolina Wrens, Red winged blackbirds, Spotted Sandpipers, and even Barn swallows call Faulkner's home.

COVID-19 Restrictions and Their Effects on the Terns

In 2020 there was no staff stationed on Faulkner's Island for the breeding season due to the COVID -19 pandemic restrictions. The staff was able to do some habitat management in the spring and the biologist visited one day a week almost every week with one volunteer. Not having a crew on the island 24/7 directly effects the tern colony because there is no one there to scare predators and explain to people why they cannot come on the island while the terns and their chicks are vulnerable.

In 2021, no known tern eggs hatched. Some factors that may have played a role in this are:

- A high predation factor (likely a result of 2020's pandemic restrictions in staffing).
- Vegetation management challenges, with no staff on the island the natural grasses overtook the nesting areas leaving little open ground for the terns to nest and many areas for predators to hide while hunting terns
- No staff presence overnight due to COVID-19 precautions.

This history is important because the changes in these two years may have affected how many of the Falkner Island terns came back to breed on the island in 2022. If a tern does not have young (a successful breeding season), then those adults may go elsewhere to find another place to breed that might be more successful and safer.

In 2022, the number of roseate terns that returned to the island was low, but the productivity was good.

There were only three Roseate tern nests on the island in 2022 (average for last 10 years is 33 pairs). Each pair had 1 fledge (young able to fly)

Common tern pair numbers were also low (1109 pairs in 2022; average for 10 years 2478 pairs). Each pair had approximately 0.4 fledges (average last 10 years is .51 fledges/nesting pair). This basically means that in 2022 less than half of the common tern pairs had a chick that lived until it could fly. However, this is not that different than the average for the island.

The Importance of the RIGHT fish...

In 2022 the terns arrived on the island on May 12th which is about a week and a half later than they usually arrive. Why? Changes in number and the type of fish species in the ever-warming Long Island Sound may have played a part in this.

The interns spent a total of 131 hours observing tern adults feeding their young.

Notes were taken about what food the adults were bringing in for the chicks to eat, whether the chick actually ate it, whether it was stolen (kleptoparasitism), and many other aspects of tern provisioning.

Did you know Roseate terns prefer sand lance to all other fish varieties?

In 2019, 66% of Roseate chicks' diet was sand lance. However, in 2022 a change occurred, sand lance were only brought in 4% of the time. In general, the staff **rarely** saw sand lance being brought in for chicks which is unusual.

Instead bay anchovy (46%) and Atlantic herring (24%) were substituted as roseate tern chick diet (in 2019, no bay anchovy were brought in to feed Roseate chicks and only 0.3% of fish were herring).

The adult Roseate terns also left the island right after their chicks fledged which is a different behavior for them from other years where they remained around to feed for a couple weeks after the chicks fledged. This may also be a result of prey fish changes in the Long Island Sound around Faulkner Island.

The Common tern chicks diet also changed. In 2019, blue fish (11%) and sand lance (41%) were primarily brought in by adults. Whereas in 2022, Atlantic herring (33%), Atlantic mackerel (15%), and Atlantic silverside (8%) were dominant with sand lance (5%) and blue fish (4%).

The staff also saw insects, squid, flounder, and shrimp being brought in as food. Although insects and shrimp are usually eaten, they do not provide the chicks with the right amount of nutrients and are a lower quality food. The squid and the flounder were rejected by the chicks.

To better determine what the terns are eating, refuge staff are working with the Northeast Fishery Center to look at the DNA of fish

in tern fecal matter. In 2022, the Faulkner crew collected fecal matter (tern poop) from common terns (adults and chicks). The scientists at the NEFC will process the tern poop to see what types of fish DNA are in the samples. They can tell what type of fish and approximate how much of that type of fish is in the sample. The data from the samples will be processed in April 2023, stay tuned.

Who's who:

We can track the movement of birds using bird bands. When anyone sees a bird band and is able to read the code on the band, they can report the band to the Bird Banding Laboratory (<https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/bblretrv/>). The Falkner crew also looks for these bands and then reports them to find out where the bird was born and how old it is. In 2022, 78 bands were recorded and reported.

Most of the banded birds were from Great Gull Island (NY). However, the crew saw one roseate tern that was banded in Brazil. This is where our roseate terns migrate to after the breeding season once they leave New England, New York and Canada. They also saw one bird from Brothers Island (Nova Scotia) on August 1st, and a New Hampshire bird on July 27th.

Predators:

In order to protect the terns during their vulnerable breeding season, a crew stays out on the island seven days a week, 24 hours a day. In 2022, they spent over 120 hours watching and harassing predators on the island. Predators include: peregrine falcon (7% of time), black-crowned night heron (36% of time), and crows (both American and fish; 4% of time). When predators were observed, crew members harassed the bird by ringing cow bells, blowing air horns, and chasing the predator until it leaves the island. The crew did not witness any of the predators taking terns; however, there was some evidence of predation seen on the island. The crew found 5 common tern eggs that had been slashed open in May and also saw the remains of an adult common tern that had been caught and eaten by a peregrine in May. No known Roseate nests were preyed upon in 2022.

What can you do to help the terns on Falkner Island?

- Spread the word that the island is closed to the public except during the FLB's Open House in September; this will help the reduce disturbance to the terns while they are raising their young
- Let people know that drones cannot be flown over the island. The terns are very afraid of drones, as they look like a predator. Drones disturb nesting and may cause terns to leave the island to look for a safer place to nest.
- Look for and report any band numbers that you see. You can see some of the terns from the mainland when they are looking for food and after they leave the island in August. The band information can be used to note where birds are foraging, where they move, and how long they live.
- Volunteer to help create habitat for the terns in the spring or to assist with maintaining living space for the Falkner Island crew (spring and fall).

Do your part to limit climate change: <https://www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions>.

Thank you, Kris Vagos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Biologist, Stewart B. McKinney NWR for Tern data and information about the day to day operations of being a biologist on Falkner's.



Common Tern + Juvenile Common Tern



Banded Common Tern



Common Tern feeding chick



Common Tern with fish



Oyster Catcher



Roseate Tern



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Invitation to Join Faulkner's Light Brigade

It is our privilege to invite you to become a member of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. We are a growing group of diverse people with a bold and important vision. Faulkner's Island and Light, although modest in size, is vast in its environmental significance and beauty. Each member of the Faulkner's Light Brigade plays a pivotal role in preserving the beauty and function of this great landmark and ecosystem. You are invited to renew your membership or become a new member the Faulkner's Light Brigade. Please consider partnering with us as we continue to outwork our mission. Every tax-deductible donation, regardless of amount will be used for the furtherance of preserving this vital landmark. Please join us. Donations can be made by mail using the attached mailer or electronically through our website (www.faulknerslight.org). Thank you for your support.

*Anthony J. Coppola, M.D.
President and Chairman*

Contributions to the Brigade are tax deductible

Checks should be made payable to: **The Faulkner's Light Brigade**

And mailed to: P.O. Box 444, Guilford, CT 06437



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the Light**
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☐ Enclosed is my company's matching gift form



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William Munzner and cousin, Alyce Jaserie, play on the official U.S. Lighthouse Service Boat, circa 1930



Keeper Arthur Munzner (left), government worker Mr. Tennington (middle), and Assistant Keeper Albert Brennecke in the wharf basin, circa 1930