



The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

June, 2026

Issue 5

Good News for Friends of Faulkner's!

—Phase 2 of Erosion Control Destined for Reality—

Preservation of Faulkner's Island lighthouse and the beautiful wildlife refuge are at the heart of the Faulkner's Light Brigade's mission. It always has been since the founding of Faulkner's Light Brigade in 1991.

By the year 2001, the Brigade's lobby had achieved both goals: a full restoration of the historic 1802 lighthouse (\$250,000) and stabilization of runaway erosion in the island's eastern embankment (\$4.5 million). Thanks to our Connecticut U.S. Congressional delegation, an Act In Congress assigned the erosion control work project to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As a result, the north tip of the island and its eastern shore were wrapped at the base with a stone revetment nearly 20 feet high and 50 feet wide. Alas, this was only Phase 1 to address erosion.

Until now. Phase 2 is destined to become a reality, thanks to U.S. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, who is leading the "charge" of the Brigade. Rosa introduced a line item in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 for a second phase of the erosion control project at a cost not to exceed \$8 million. This bill, passed by both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives and signed into law by President Joe Biden in January of 2025,

authorized the project to move forward. Funding will come through future appropriation bills. The bill provides a clear provision to protect the island with an *extension* of the existing revetment and revegetation of its upper bluff face.

Additionally, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro secured \$100,000 under "Community Project Funding" in the FY 2027 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill for immediate use by the Army Corps to begin work on the scope and design of Phase 2. This bill was signed into law by President Donald Trump in January 2026.

Rosa remains committed to working with us to ensure that future funding will be provided to support the recommendations that will come from the Army Corps' feasibility study. This study is due to be completed by October 31, 2027.

Although all avenues leading to the final phase of erosion control work on Faulkner's Island may not be quick or easy, the die has been cast. It's good news for Faulkner's Light Brigade and friends of Faulkner's everywhere! Thank you for your vision and support, Rosa!



The back or eastern side of Faulkner's Island illustrates Phase 1 of the traprock (igneous basalt) stone revetment protecting the lower embankment for approximately 1000 linear feet. The upper embankment has been reduced in pitch with a hardy cover of vegetation.

President's Note

Since joining the Faulkner's Light Brigade and accepting the position of President and Chairman in 2022, it's been a privilege to be part of this outstanding group of people. I would like to sincerely thank every member and volunteer, and the Board of Directors for your continued interest and support. We have accomplished much over these past four years and can be proud of the results as we see our mission progressing.

Our effort began with reconnecting with past members, welcoming new members, and being a resource for the public. All the while these efforts were integrated with the preservation of the Faulkner's Lighthouse and Island. We set distinct goals, formed work committees, and continue to work towards completion of those goals.

Faulkner's Light Brigade has done extremely well in rising from its pandemic-related decline and membership attrition. Our membership has been continually increasing and is now at 200 members. We continue to welcome new members!

The Octagon was recreated in 2022 and has had four outstanding annual publications since its rebirth. There has been an average of 750 copies distributed each year, and there is also an electronic version on our website, which has been completely redesigned and rebuilt. The website is a great resource and is regularly updated. 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 site. I encourage you to have a look at www.faulknerslightbrigade.com.

In the Fall of 2023, we hosted

an open house on Faulkner's Island. Almost 300 people were able to visit the island and tour the lighthouse. It was a great day for all those who were able to attend. I had the distinct privilege to meet many of you and have been able to keep in contact with you.

We continue to partner with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and to offer volunteer services on Faulkner's Island



wherever needed. Last year we were able to assist in preparing the tern nesting areas and help with building maintenance. While we are continuing our work in these areas, we remain focused on two critical projects: the erosion of the eastern and southern coasts of the island, and the restoration needs of the lighthouse. We are partnering with the United States Coast Guard to begin the process of addressing the lighthouse needs.

As we continue to assess the needs of the island and the lighthouse, we are in the process of securing funding for these projects. In 2023 we received a grant through the Guilford Foundation in partnership with the Town of Guilford. We presently

have been working with Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) funding bill for the Phase 2 Erosion Abatement Project (see lead article for the details). We are also in the process of applying for additional grants for the restoration of the lighthouse.

These past four years have been a richly rewarding time for me. It is however with great sadness that I will be stepping down as President and Chairman of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. This was a difficult, but necessary decision for me. I feel strongly that it is also what is in the best interest of Faulkner's Light Brigade. I would like to sincerely thank the Board of Directors and all the members of the Brigade for your support, encouragement, and especially for your commitment to our mission. Going forward I will remain on the Board and will also assist in the transition of a new chairman. Please contact me directly (coppolamd@gmail.com) or through the website if you are interested in being considered for a board position or the Chairman position, or if you would just like to chat.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to all the authors and contributors to this edition of The Octagon. Special thanks to our editor emeritus Dr. K. J. Lee, editor Pamela Carley, and graphic designer Jeannie 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 Faulkner's Light Brigade to "keep the light shining."

Anthony J. Coppola, MD
President and Chairman

Lightkeeper Arthur Jensen of Faulkner's Island, 1911–1916

Arthur Oskar Johan Jensen was a skilled seaman, deckhand, navigator, swimmer, harpooner, and marksman. His five year assignment as keeper of the light at Faulkner's Island helped the American lighthouse earn its enduring symbolism of integrity and reliability.

As a Norwegian native, Arthur Jensen (1875–1947) sailed as a merchant mariner on a variety of Norwegian ships, followed by enrollment in a navigational school in the port/river city of Drammen. He

qualified to sail around the world, ending up in New York City at 17 years of age. He filled out citizenship papers, then took off again on Norwegian ships bound for New Zealand and beyond. Jensen was a good fit for the U.S. Navy. He joined Navy Admiral George Dewey's fleet on the schooner *Columbia Concord* and in 1898 sailed to Cuba, South Africa, and the Philippines, where he contracted malaria. He was honorably discharged and began life on land in the U.S. Navy. This led to a position

on remote Faulkner's Island Light Station in 1911.

Arthur Jensen's daughter, Vivian Jensen Chapin, of Port Townsend, Washington, traveled to Guilford on two occasions (1989/1993) to visit with family here. She shared colorful stories about her family's island life, which follow in her article, illustrated by rare photographs recently sent by Vivian's daughter, Sally Jensen Kiely.

Joel Helander

A Tale of Life at Faulkner's Island

By Vivian Jensen Chapin

My parents, Arthur and Ingeborg Jensen, lived on Faulkner's Island when my father served there as lightkeeper from April 11, 1911 to July 19, 1916. From assistant keeper at Eaton's Neck Light Station on the north shore of Long Island at a salary of \$40 a month, he was now keeper at \$624 per annum, or \$52 a month.

Replacing Emer J. Rathbun, who was transferred, my father and mother arrived from Eaton's Neck via the lighthouse tender *Larkspur*. Their duties at Faulkner's were keeping the light and fog signal, caring for the buildings, etc.

At this time in history, when my parents were arriving at Faulkner's Island—the electric light had been invented in 1879—the gasoline automobile in 1885, but change was slow in coming to Faulkner's Island. The only luxury my parents had was a Victrola, listening to the records of Enrico Caruso. They did not have a radio, a toaster, a clothes washer or a dryer, just to mention a few of the things we take for granted today.

Having assistant keepers and their families close by helped combat the loneliness of the island. The Gregory family was particularly memorable, with their three lively children. Edith, the youngest, liked to follow my mother around the island and in particular liked to gather the eggs in the chicken house. One day, Edith decided to make a mud pie with some eggs, but that particular week, decoys

had been placed in the nests and Edith found out to her disgust that there was “nossing in them today, Mrs. Jensen,” as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Once a year, workmen would arrive by tender from the Lighthouse Depot and my parents were required to furnish them with lodging and subsistence. My mother had a vegetable garden, and she added to this the harvest of the sea, such as fish and shellfish.

My father had a 26-foot inboard, gas-powered motorboat, which could become a sailboat with a mast. When the weather was favorable, they would sail to the Connecticut River and go upriver to Essex, and on down the Sound for the Yale-Harvard races in New London.

My parents would go to Guilford once a week. Their good friends in town were Harry and Mary Griswold, who lived on Whitfield Street. The Griswolds had a spare bedroom called ‘the Jensen bedroom,’ available in case of bad weather. My parents enjoyed the amenities of spending time in Guilford, from being members of the Masonic Order and Eastern Star to drinking checkerberry sodas at Douden's [Drugstore] on the Green.

Because of distant medical care, my parents had suffered the loss of two infant children while at Eaton's Neck, their former station. Consequently, when they realized my

brother's arrival would be a possibility, my father requested a transfer back to Eaton's Neck where they would at least be on land. That baby boy grew up with a strong bond to the sea and retired from Farrell Lines shipping company as commodore of the fleet in 1974.



Lightkeeper Arthur Jensen in regulation uniform, 1912

Faulkner's Island Light Station viewed from the southwest, 1914. Left to right: davits for hoisting boats at landing wharf, coal pocket, A-frame steam fog whistle building, chicken house, barn/workshop, keeper's dwelling, light tower, oil engine fog whistle building.



The Return of the Terns on Faulkner's Island A Report 2025

Located 3.5 miles off the shoreline of Guilford, Faulkner's is a 5-acre island featuring rocky beaches, steep vegetated slopes, and rip-rap shorelines. Atop the island sits the second oldest active lighthouse in Connecticut—Faulkner's Lighthouse built in 1802. Faulkner's Island was acquired by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in 1985 and is part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Every spring terns migrate 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 largest breeding colony of common tern and the only colony of roseate tern, an endangered species in the state. There are other curious birds that return to the island in the spring to raise their young. The American oyster-catcher, American black ducks, willets, Carolina wrens, red-winged blackbirds, spotted sandpipers, and even barn swallows call Faulkner's Island home.

Roseate Tern Report

The 2025 breeding season was a successful one for the federally endangered roseate terns. With plentiful prey fish and no known predation 28 nesting pairs were recorded; due to habitat loss from sea-level rise and storm-driven erosion the roseates were forced to nest on the northern shelf and revetment instead of their favorite spot—the North Spit. Artificial cover, including nest boxes, pallets and plywood were arranged across the shelf area to provide sufficient nesting space for the roseate tern. There were 41 of 43 roseate tern

chicks resighted, 37 species of which were banded with a federal band and a yellow field-readable band with black lettering (Federally-licensed bird bander, USFWS Biologist, Kris Vagos performed all banding and banding data was submitted to the Bird Banding Laboratory). The average of 1.46 fledglings (when a chick is able to fly) per nesting pair is the highest productivity for roseates since the early 1980's.

Resighting is one of the activities the interns do while on Faulkner's. Interns spend hours watching the terns through high-powered scopes looking for terns previously banded. This year they spotted previously banded birds that had been banded 6-20 years ago (the birds bands dates may not indicate exactly how old they were.) How do they know this? All bands are reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory www.reportband.gov. The band information also indicates where they were banded; 35% of resighted bands were from Great Gull Island in New York, 33% were banded on Faulkner's, and one was banded in Brazil! The rest of the sighted terns did not have bands.

Common Tern Report

Common tern nests were counted during the census conducted on June 3. The effort was supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, seasonal staff, and partner organizations who assisted in surveying and counting nests. A total of 1,630 nesting pairs of common tern nests were counted. The common terns nest everywhere—on the shell and rocky beaches, on the man-made shelves, and on the weed mat areas and other open areas on the island

(staircase, boardwalks, etc.) Volunteers cleared and placed 4,700 square feet of weed mat and covered it with heat-treated mulch to create open areas for the common tern to nest. To expand nesting opportunities for the common tern an additional 500 square feet of weed mat was installed in the fall of 2024. We were rewarded by counting 70 common terns nesting there during our census. The Faulkner crew also observed what type of fish the common terns were feeding their chicks. They most frequently were seen delivering sand lance, silversides, and Atlantic mackerel. The Project Poop report is expected to help identify the most abundant and preferred prey species using fish eDNA from collected tern poop.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) - Project Poop

Faulkner's is again participating in Project Poop (Cornell Lab of Ornithology),

yes, this is real! It is part of a flyway study to examine the diets of priority bird species. DNA is taken out of the samples and scientists can identify which fish were being eaten. This is important information to know because without the correct diet, the tern colony will not be successful. Knowing what fish we have in Long Island Sound during the breeding season, how far the terns need to go to find them and bring them back will have a direct impact on the survival of the species.

Due to the small population size of roseate terns on Faulkner's island, eDNA samples have not been collected.

Eighty Environmental DNA (eDNA) samples were collected; 40 samples were collected from the adult common tern at various times (during incubation and chick-rearing periods) as well as 40 samples from their chicks

(after hatch - chick rearing) The study encompasses the entire Atlantic flyway—a huge area, requiring a lot of samples and this takes time. Results are not available at time of article publication. Observational surveys by

FWS staff during the breeding season of fish brought in by adult terns indicate the sand lance as the primary fish species to feed the chicks, with mackerel and Atlantic silversides seen as well.

Special thanks to Kris Vagos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Stewart B. McKinney NWR for tern data and information. And special thanks to the staff of Stewart B. McKinney wildlife refuge whose partnership is invaluable: Rick Potvin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge Manager, Shaun Roche, Visitor Services Manager, Sean Healy, Facilities Assistant and Shakira Jinez, Administrative Assistant. Thank you to all the volunteers—from college students to high school students to Scouting organizations to individuals who respond to the yearly call to help set up the island for the terns return, the terns may not say it in words, but they appreciate you!

Deanna Broderick - FLB Secretary



Faulkner's Island—Spring 2025 Lighthouse, Research Station Privy, Terns flying. Taken during census 2025.



Common tern pair and chick. Female common tern with chick attempting to eat prey fish from male.



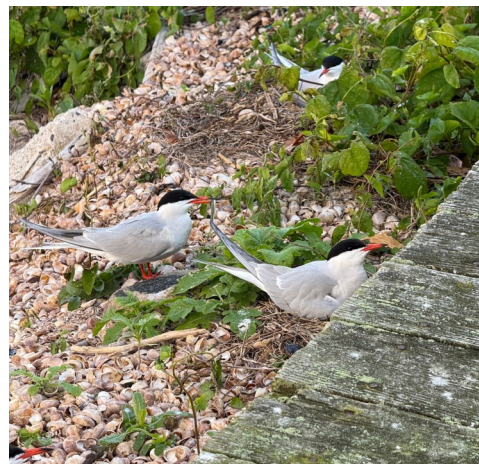
USFWS interns and Kris Vagos, biologist Locating roseate tern chicks under rocks and man-made nesting areas.



USFWS biologist Kris Vagos banding a tern chick.



Faulkner's Lighthouse with weed mat and mulch in the foreground. Island is prepped for the return of the terns.



Common terns "nesting" on shell beach to the left of the dock.



Common tern chick and egg (chick pipping) on weed mat seen during census.



Census Day! June 3. Dedicated team of volunteers, seasoned staff, and partner organizations assisted in surveying and counting nests.



Roseate tern habitat, Northern shelf. Roseate terns and chicks. Note "artificial cover" nest boxes plywood pallet.

Faulkner's Light Brigade Membership

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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 to 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.faulknerslightbrigade.com). 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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☐ **Lightkeeper**
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Student**
\$10 - \$19

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Email _____

☐ New membership

☐ Membership renewal

☐ I am interested in volunteering

☐ Enclosed is my company's matching gift form

Annual Membership Meeting

The annual membership meeting of Faulkner's Light Brigade will be held Tuesday, June 2, 2026, 7:30 p.m., in the "Faulkner's Room" of the Greene Community Center, 32 Church Street, Guilford, CT.

A member of the U.S. Coast Guard's Aids To Navigation Team (ANT), Sector Long Island Sound, will speak about the team's responsibilities, including Faulkner's Island Lighthouse.

Mark your calendars! FLB members and the public are cordially invited.

For those of you who missed the 2025 annual membership meeting, a link to the program: *Faulkner's Island: A Case for Preservation*, can be found on the Brigade's web site (www.faulknerslightbrigade.com)

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The Octagon

P.O. Box 444
Guilford, CT 06437
www.faulknerslightbrigade.com

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Guilford Fair Parade 2025

The Faulkner's Light Brigade (FLB) together with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) were pleased to be part of the Guilford Fair Parade on Saturday, September 20, 2025.

The "Theme" of this year's parade was: "Experiencing the Sounds of Guilford."

Embracing the theme, FLB Secretary, Deanna Broderick, made a recording of the terns that use Faulkner's Island as a breeding ground during the spring and summer. The island is home to 1,630 nesting pairs of Common Terns and 29 nesting pairs of the

endangered Roseate Terns—all combined make a very distinctive, OK, loud sound! The recording was played on a loop throughout the parade route. We also got "crafty" with the Cricut maker and made cutouts of Common Terns which "flew" around the star of the show, the Blue Goose! Greg Broderick drove the Blue Goose and FLB Chair, Anthony Coppola in his blue convertible VW Beetle along the parade route.

The Blue Goose was designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling as the symbol for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist J.N. "Ding" Darling designed the symbol in the 1930s while he was chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, forerunner of today's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During the early 1930s, Canada goose populations

were struggling at that time in history, so J. N. "Ding" Darling used the bird's likeness in a drawing to represent waterfowl conservation. Since then, it has become an icon.

The Blue Goose has been used on USFWS refuge boundary markers, entrance signs, brochures and exhibits since 1936.

Deanna Broderick - Secretary FLB



The "Blue Goose" logo



The Blue Goose enjoying a ride in a car with sounds of terns playing on the radio.