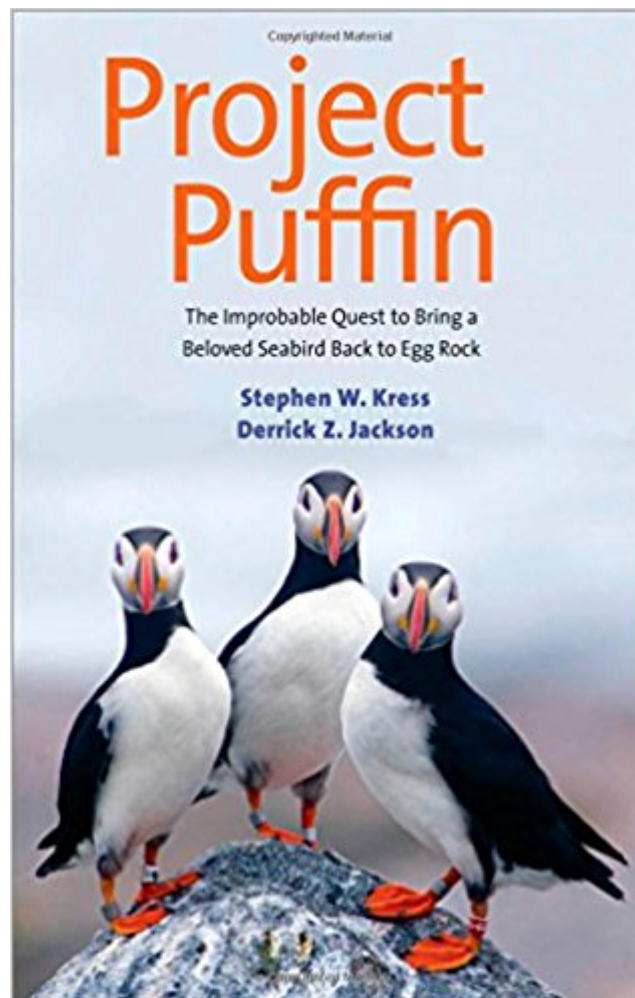




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# Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest To Bring A Beloved Seabird Back To Egg Rock



## Synopsis

The inspiring story of a young ornithologist who reintroduced puffins where none had been seen for a century – Project Puffin – is the inspiring story of how a beloved seabird was restored to long-abandoned nesting colonies off the Maine coast. As a young ornithology instructor at the Hog Island Audubon Camp, Dr. Stephen W. Kress learned that puffins had nested on nearby islands until extirpated by hunters in the late 1800s. To right this environmental wrong, he resolved to bring puffins back to one such island – Eastern Egg Rock. Yet bringing the plan to reality meant convincing skeptics, finding resources, and inventing restoration methods at a time when many believed in “letting nature take its course.” Today, Project Puffin has restored more than 1,000 puffin pairs to three Maine islands. But even more exciting, techniques developed during the project have helped to restore rare and endangered seabirds worldwide. Further, reestablished puffins now serve as a window into the effects of global warming. The success of Dr. Kress’s project offers hope that people can restore lost wildlife populations and the habitats that support them. The need for such inspiration has never been greater.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 376 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press (April 28, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300204817

ISBN-13: 978-0300204810

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #619,486 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #94 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Coastal #260 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Ornithology #541 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Birds & Birdwatching > Field Guides

## Customer Reviews

“A story that is, at its heart, about how a kid from Ohio accomplished one of the biggest conservation victories of our time.” – BirdWatching magazine (BirdWatching magazine) “Project Puffin documents how one determined scientist with a real passion for the region, its ecology, its history, and its birdlife, can accomplish the reality of bringing back a

species with a highly complex life history. It is exactly what lay readers and students need to read in order to begin to understand what conservation science actually is. And it is really fun (and I daresay inspiring) to read.

•John Kricher, author of *The Balance of Nature* and *A Neotropical Companion* (John Kricher 2014-07-24)

“A story of struggle and hope, and an inspiration to future wildlife stewards.

•Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle* (Richard Louv 2014-07-31)

“An inspiring book on Stephen Kress’s dream of re-introducing puffins to an island where man had eradicated them. A brilliant case study of how drive and enthusiasm can overcome problems.

•Mike P. Harris, co-author of *The Puffin* (Mike P. Harris 2014-08-11)

“The world needs more people like Steve Kress, whose singular commitment and passion—a dedication to one bird at one island—has had a global impact. This book brings his story wonderfully and personally to life. I’m sure it will inspire and encourage a new generation of caretakers of the natural world.

•David Sibley, author of *The Sibley Guides* (David Sibley 2014-12-16)

“Engaging. . . Here is one of the great success stories of conservation. The verdict: Of interest to birders, natural history buffs, New Englanders, conservationists, and environmentalists.

•Henry T. Armistead, *Library Journal* (Henry T. Armistead *Library Journal*)

“Restoring puffins to Maine has been a glorious, four-decades obsession for Steve Kress—one underpinned by plenty of stubbornness and grit, as this frank retelling of Project Puffin’s remarkable history makes clear. And thank goodness for that tenacity, because the techniques he pioneered on Eastern Egg Rock are today helping endangered seabirds around the world. This is the compelling story of the messy, uncertain, ultimately uplifting work of real conservation.

•Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind* (Scott Weidensaul 2014-08-26)

“A well-told drama.

•Natural History magazine (*Natural History magazine*)

“Readers who love the nitty-gritty of conservation will get a good flavor of it here.

•Bob Holmes, *New Scientist* (Bob Holmes *New Scientist*)

“Kress’s achievement is impressive both as a conservation victory and as an example of personal devotion and patience. . . . [His] charm and wit bring the project to life.

•Thomas Urquhart, *Portland Press-Herald* (Thomas Urquhart *Portland Press-Herald*)

“Kress and Jackson present a ripping yarn. . . a fine read.

•Iain J. Stenhouse, *The Condor* (Iain J. Stenhouse *The Condor*)

Stephen W. Kress is the National Audubon Society’s Vice President for Bird Conservation and director of the Audubon Seabird Restoration Program and Hog Island Audubon Camp. Derrick

Z. Jackson, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for commentary and an accomplished photographer, is a contributing columnist at the Boston Globe. He lives in Cambridge, MA.

What a marvelous story. Stephen Kress and his associates, including his wife, have been on a seemingly quixotic adventure off the coast of Maine seeking to bring these tough little birds back to nesting grounds on Egg Rock. [Even the name of the island has to make you smile.] Kress read in an old field guide that the birds had once nested there; the last ones disappeared around 1885. (A list of the associates appears online together with some heart warming descriptions of what these dedicated people have done: [projectpuffin.audubon.org/staff-22](http://projectpuffin.audubon.org/staff-22) ] When Kress first visited 40 years ago, the 7-acre island was nearly barren, with only grass and gulls left. Not a puffin in sight. Not even an old puffin bone. "But it had great habitat because there were great boulders on the island, and I could imagine the puffins standing on top of them." He writes that he started the project in 1973 with dismal results; but then 1977 was the breakthrough year; he got the idea of using decoys, and darned if it didn't work. The project involved finding puffin chicks and transplanting them as hatchlings, hand-rearing them, tagging them and then waiting for years for them to grow up at sea and come home to mate and rear their own young. Between 1973 and 1986, 954 young puffins were transplanted from Great Island to Eastern Egg Rock and 914 of these successfully fledged. A record 101 pairs of puffins nested on Eastern Egg Rock in 2008, the 35th year of the project. Today, more than 1,000 pairs of puffins populate the five Maine islands around Muscongus Bay. But it took eight years before the first pair came home to mate, and another 30 or so to get the healthy population that lives and nests there today. The casual writing is delightful: "The work can be depressing, but we have a pick-me-up ãfÏÏÏ ã ã ã • it's called "grubbing" for chicks. They worm their way far down in a jumble of boulders. A ornithologist emerges with a 10-inch beaked bundle of gray and white fluff. It has a distinctive crown, a little like a bald-headed friar." He's got male-pattern feathers," MacNamee says. "He's got a friar's haircut," says Post. MacNamee names him "Friar Tuck." Friar Tuck is banded, measured, weighed and returned to his burrow. With luck, in a few weeks this new Maine native will fledge and take on the mature puffin's distinctive colors. And after dark, one night soon, he'll head out onto uncertain seas. These are delightful little birds, tough as nails, and the pictures in this pretty little book come up beautifully in the eBook version. An absolute delight for bird lovers, nature lovers, lovers of all kinds. Robert C. Ross May 2015

ãfÏÏÏ ã ã ã "Those first five birds were our victory ãfÏÏÏ ã ã ã • they represented an enormous amount of effort, trial and error, and no small amount of dumb luck. The five puffins were

the first of nearly two thousand that would follow a similar path from Newfoundland to Maine. Each was a miracle and offered hope that someday puffins would return to Egg Rock to found a new colony. *Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock* pp. 88-89. Stephen Kress caught his first glimpse of puffins off the coast of northern Maine as a young intern in the summer of 1967. He fell hopelessly in love with them. A couple of years later while working a gig at the Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp near Boothbay Harbor, ME he uncovered the fact that puffins were once plentiful at a tiny island called Egg Rock just a few miles off the coast from the camp. This tidbit of knowledge would change Stephen's life forever. Suddenly, Stephen Kress was positing the crazy notion that one day puffins might be restored to Egg Rock. Thus began a journey that has lasted for more than four decades. Kress and co-author Derrick Z. Jackson chronicle this unlikely tale in the thrilling new book *Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock*. You will discover that what Steve Kress and his colleagues have achieved is nothing short of remarkable. It is important to note that what Stephen Kress and company were attempting to do had never been done before. As you might expect the restoration techniques that evolved were largely the result of trial and error. The relocation effort began with 6 puffin chicks back in 1973. Over the ensuing decade an average of 100 chicks per year would be relocated to Eastern Egg Rock from a small island off the coast of Newfoundland. For those involved the work was painstakingly difficult. And for several years it was unclear whether Project Puffin would ultimately be successful. But succeed it did and now the strategies developed by Stephen Kress are employed with an impressive variety of seabirds in locations around the globe. In fact, after conducting a world review of seabird restoration project using his social attraction and translocation techniques Kress reported: "We found that 128 seabird restoration projects had been tried around the world to benefit forty-seven seabird species in a hundred localities in fourteen countries." While Kress remains cautiously optimistic about the future he clearly understands the sobering realities that climate change, predators, disease and shrinking habitats present. Ongoing success will require dogged persistence by those entrusted with the awesome responsibility of monitoring these efforts. Towards the end of the book Kress and Jackson also discuss a fascinating case involving Caspian terns (protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918) and young salmonids (protected by the Endangered Species Act) that pitted the National Audubon Society against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Fascinating stuff! I must tell you that I became totally engrossed while reading *Project Puffin*. The authors mention several television shows that were filmed about their work back in the 1970s and 1980s. I have already watched one of them on YouTube and have every intention

of watching the others. I found "Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock" to an extremely well-written book utilizing language that a scientifically-challenged person like myself could easily understand. As a result, Stephen Kress and Derrick Jackson have succeeded in whetting my appetite. I want to know more about natural history and projects like this one. Very highly recommended!

Reading about conservation is always a challenge when one considers just how difficult it is to take on projects that involve MANY organizations with little/no funding yet believe in the cause enough to see it through. The author conveys his journey to reintroducing the Puffin colony to a small 'island' where the population was destroyed through rampant feather hunting by writing both concisely & eloquently. I not only experienced how the project evolved and the ways lessons were learned, I also gained insight into just how intricately connected everything is to everything else. Yes, that statement could be considered 'trite' but in this case, it's not. Stephen Kress not only birthed break-thru ways to restore the Puffin to one island, his ingenuity and thorough approach has inspired innumerable on-going global efforts for similar restorations. Highly recommend this book and the perspectives it engenders.

Our family has enjoyed an intimate relationship with the entire coast of Maine (but mostly Boothbay) for over 40 years. It's the "go to" place to gather with family and friends each and every year. The documentation of the arduous trials endured by the dedicated people involved in this restoration of the species was amazing. The Puffin is to Maine what the American Eagle is to the entire US! A very good read and a wonderful gift (for which this book was intended) for friends who are also "Mainers" in heart and history. Just had to order a copy for our selves and our bookcase!

An excellent book for anyone interested in Steve Kress's Puffin rehab work in Maine. Covers many topics and other rehab programs. Shows the lengthy process and dedication of a team of people..OK for non professional birders too.

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