



October 23, 2008

Dear Friends:

20 Gilsland Farm Road  
Falmouth, Maine 04105  
(207) 781-2330  
[www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org)

Hog Island Audubon Center and its staff are facing major changes, and I would like you to hear from me about them firsthand.

To ensure a sustainable future for this historic and beloved property, Maine Audubon and the National Audubon Society are undertaking a joint planning process, with input from Hog Island's donors, alumni, staff and instructors, and scholarship-supporting chapters as well as the Friends of Hog Island group and Project Puffin colleagues. The goal is to use this unique property in the best way possible to serve Audubon's mission of conservation.

Maine Audubon's Board of Trustees also has made the difficult decision to suspend Hog Island's programming in 2009, including residential sessions, wildlife boat cruises, and operations at Todd Wildlife Sanctuary. In 2008, despite intensive marketing efforts by staff and a public relations firm, low enrollment forced the cancellation of five weeks of programming. Following several years of endowment support for Hog Island from Maine Audubon, and facing uncertain financial times nationwide, neither National Audubon nor Maine Audubon can continue to risk exposure to the substantial financial losses that a 2009 season could produce.

To say that I will miss the island and its many participants is certainly an understatement. With you, I share lifelong memories: the breathtaking initial view of the island, the voyage across the "Narrows," the pleasure of family-style dining, learning every day through jam-packed activities, the thrill of seeing Atlantic puffins, the accessibility of world-class instructors, the genuine reawakening of one's sense of wonder, and the call to action on behalf of the planet. Time and again, a residential session at Hog Island has been described as "life changing." These shared experiences certainly make it so for me.

It has been a privilege and honor to serve as director over the past decade.

The opportunity to shape learning through shared ecological inquiry is a professional satisfaction I will not forget. I cherish the many friendships made and the innumerable contributions of dedicated volunteers, instructors and their families, resilient student assistants, accommodating neighbors, and the core team of staffers at both Hog Island and Gilsland Farm who literally have given Hog Island their blood, sweat, and tears.

Now, our learning from the past will help create a bridge to a future for a facility sustainable in an ever-changing world. I ask you to add your voice of support to mine, and give ideas, encouragement, financial gifts, and more to ensure Hog Island's continuing legacy to conservation.

Please go online to [www.maineaudubon.org/hogisland](http://www.maineaudubon.org/hogisland), where you'll be able to post comments and sign up for Hog Island updates.

With respect and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seth Benz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Seth" and "Benz" being significantly larger and more prominent.

Seth Benz  
Director, Hog Island Audubon Center