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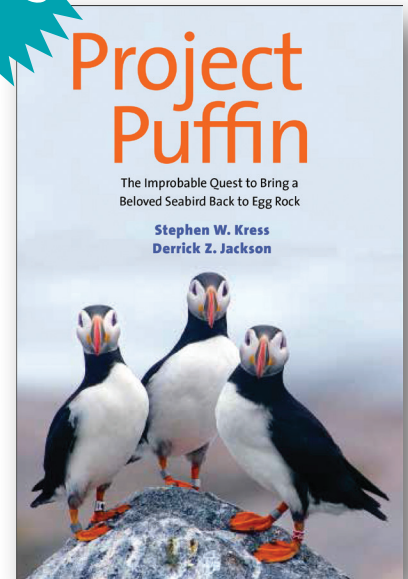
## Project Puffin

The Improbable Quest to Bring  
a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock

**Stephen W. Kress and Derrick Z. Jackson**

*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.



From Yale University Press; 376 pages, hard cover, 30 black-and-white illustrations; plus 8-page color insert

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An excerpt from

## Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock

Stephen W. Kress and Derrick Z. Jackson



ATLANTIC PUFFIN BY DERRICK Z. JACKSON

After the first five Newfoundland puffin chicks fledged from Egg Rock, four years passed without a single sighting of a returning puffin. My collaborators with the Canadian Wildlife Service were having doubts about continuing the program and ongoing funding was unlikely without some sign of success. I worried that these highly social birds might be returning to the vicinity of Egg Rock, but if they did not see other puffins on the island, they might not stay long enough for us to see them. And if they landed on the water but never came ashore, we would not see their bands and be able to prove that the translocations were working.

The urgency for success led to the genesis of our use of decoys, now a hallmark of Project Puffin. Waterfowl hunters have long used decoys to lure ducks and geese into hunting range, as did shorebird market hunters in the late nineteenth century, but I could not find any use of decoys for luring birds to nesting habitat. I reasoned that if decoys could lure birds into range for hunters, perhaps they could also lure birds to historic nesting grounds. We set out the first of the decoys on June 3, 1977, but extreme weather kept us off the island until June 12th. On that day I was returning staff to Egg Rock when I spotted a quick-winged bird flying low over the water near the landing. Soon my curiosity was replaced by disbelief. It was a puffin! I shouted to fellow researcher Tom French who was rowing ashore at the time. Tom barely broke his rowing stride to lift his binoculars, but I was beside myself with excitement. It was the first returning puffin and it landed so close to the boat that I could see its leg bands underwater. Later, Tom explained that he and the other assistants just assumed that the project was going to work because I said it would, so he was not especially surprised.

More puffins showed us their leg bands in the coming years, but by 1981, none were nesting. Eight years after moving the first puffin chick (twelve years after conceiving the idea of the Project), I was still hopeful—but the critics of the program were becoming increasingly loud. ...

### About the Authors

**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. He lives in Ithaca, New York. **Derrick Z. Jackson**, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for commentary and an accomplished photographer, is an associate editor and editorial board member of the Boston Globe. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.