

Hope Island Narragansett Bay Research Reserve

Background

This small, 91-acre island lies 1.5 miles west of southern Prudence Island and 3 miles south of Patience Island. The topography of Hope Island is very irregular, with numerous low hills, ledges, and rocky outcrops and the shoreline is generally steep and rocky. There is one, small freshwater wetland located in an isolated depression in the south central portion of the island. Much of the northern end of Hope is vegetated by grasses but many other areas have shrubs including bayberry, rose, and poison ivy. The central part of the island contains tall shrubs and trees such as red cedar, staghorn sumac, shadbush, and black willow. A single strand of black locust occupies a low hill on the northern part of the island. Hope is inhabited by the Eastern cottontail rabbit and serves as one of the most significant nesting areas on the east coast for wading birds. In addition to the egret and heron rookery, many black-backed and herring gulls nest on the rocks. During the winter, harbor seals occasionally use the exposed offshore rocks as haulout and resting sites. Soft-shelled clams, quahogs, American lobsters, striped bass, tautog, black-backed flounder, and sea trout are abundant in the waters around Hope Island. The present nesting colonial wading birds include great egrets, snowy egrets, and black-crowned night herons. Other nesting birds include double-crested cormorants, Canada geese, herring gulls and black backed gulls.



History of Hope Island

There is an 18th century farm site on the west side of Hope Island. To date, no archaeological work or documentary research has been carried out on this site. During WWII the island was used by the Navy as an ammunition storage site. There are still ammunition bunkers and concrete roads remaining from this period.

There is a ¾-mile abandoned military road around the perimeter of the island, however access is not permitted when the island is closed during the bird nesting season.