The Cuckolds: In Need of a Worthy Steward
Story and photos by Jeremy D'Entremont

In a 1962 article in the *Boothbay Register* newspaper, Malcolm Willoughby described a view of Maine's Cuckolds Lighthouse at sunset: "The white light against a glowing red and golden sky... the dark outline of the trees on Cape Newagen, and tired seagulls winging their way eastward... produce a scene and a sense never to be forgotten." This unusual and scenic lighthouse has survived tremendous change over the years. Declared excess federal property, it's now due to be transferred to a suitable new caretaker under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000 (NHLPA).

The Cuckolds, a pair of treacherous ledges at the entrance to Boothbay Harbor, apparently were named for a point of land on the Thames River in England that was granted to a London man to assuage his anger after King John had an affair with his wife. The Cuckolds in Maine may have been named by a transplanted Londoner.

In 1890 the Cuckolds were described as "much dreaded by mariners in thick weather," and as a result funds were soon appropriated for the building of a fog signal station. A steam-driven Daboll fog trumpet and keeper's house were established in 1892. Local mariners believed a lighthouse was also called for and the government finally agreed in 1907. The Cuckolds was too small to build a separate lighthouse, so a small tower was built on the roof of the signal house. An attached two-story keeper's dwelling was built at the same time.

The Cuckolds Light was automated in 1975. Some sources claim that the Blizzard of 1978 destroyed the keeper's dwelling, but Coast Guard sources indicate it was demolished in 1977. The original fog signal buidling with the light tower on top remains standing, and the automated light and foghorn continue as active aids to navigation.

In June 2004 it was announced that the Cuckolds Light Station will be transferred to a new owner under the provisions of the NHLPA. On October 7 a group including representatives of the General Services Administration and the National Park Service went by boat to the lighthouse on an inspection visit. I went on the trip as a representative of the American Lighthouse Foundation. Also

along were several members of a consortium that is applying for ownership of the lighthouse. The consortium includes members of the Earth Conservation Corps and a number of concerned local citizens.

Access to the island is tricky, even on a calm day, so there might never be public access here on a regular basis. But as the accompanying photos show, this is a unique structure that's well worth preserving.

To learn more about the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000, see
www.cr.nps.gov/maritime/nhlpa/nhlpa.htm

PHOTO CAPTIONS

1 – A view of the Cuckolds from the north.

2 – To land on the island it was necessary to transfer from a larger boat to a skiff. The passengers then had to walk up a slippery wooden boat ramp. Luckily, on this day the seas were very calm.

3 – A view of the lighthouse and solar panels from the south side of the island.

4 – A protective wooden wall stands on the east side of the island.

5 – The remains of the foundation of the keeper's dwelling as seen from the top of the lighthouse.

6 – The group that went on the site inspection visit on October 7, 2004.

7 – A parting look at the Cuckolds from the water.