

SWAN'S ISLAND ME¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

The town of Swan's Island, Maine (44.06°N, 68.28°W) is located in Hancock County. It is 27 miles from Bar Harbor, 98 miles from Rockland, and 137 miles from Augusta. The town has a total area of 82.4 mi², of which 68.4 mi² is water (State of Maine 2004).



Map 1. Location of Swan's Island, ME (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

Swan's Island is divided into four distinct communities: Swan's Island Village, usually referred to simply as "The Harbor" on the western shore of Burnt Coat Harbor; Minturn on the eastern shore of Burnt Coat Harbor; and Atlantic bordering Mackerel Cove and the northeastern shore where the best farmland existed. In 1850, the farms of Swan's Island provided a perfect complement to the annual cycle of fishing. Forty percent of the wage earners on the island were farmers, though the figure dropped to 15 percent by 1880. The cod fisheries, in Penobscot Bay and on the Grand Banks, formed the backbone of the community. Small boats were used in the local fisheries, with larger vessels being used as the fishing spread northward toward the offshore fishing banks. By 1880, the Swan's Island fleet consisted of 21 vessels, a fleet comparable to that of Deer Isle and Vinalhaven. The herring industry, for bait or canning, assumed importance by 1890, along with lobster fishing. Ownership of their own boats was an important goal for every fisherman, and by 1895,

¹ These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

² For purposes of citation please use the following template: "Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov."

almost a quarter of the taxpayers on the island were listed as owning their own craft (Ellsworth American 2002).

Historically there have been three post offices and three zip codes on Swan’s Island, one in each village, but as of 1995 a new central post office was opened at the approach to Swan’s Island village and rural free delivery has been added.

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data⁴, Swan’s Island had a total population of 327, down 6% from the reported population of 348 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this 2000 total, 51.4% were males and 48.6% were females. The median age was 40.9 years and 73.7% of the population was 21 years or older while 22.0% was 62 or older.

Swan’s Island’s age structure (Figure 1) shows the highest percentage of the population between the ages of 40-49, with the number of males exceeding the number of females. The 20-29 years age group was smaller than the 10-19 and 30-39 age groups, showing that young people are leaving the community after high school. Among the 20 to 29 years and the 40 to 49 years age groups, the number of young males is dominant showing that young females are apparently leaving the community.

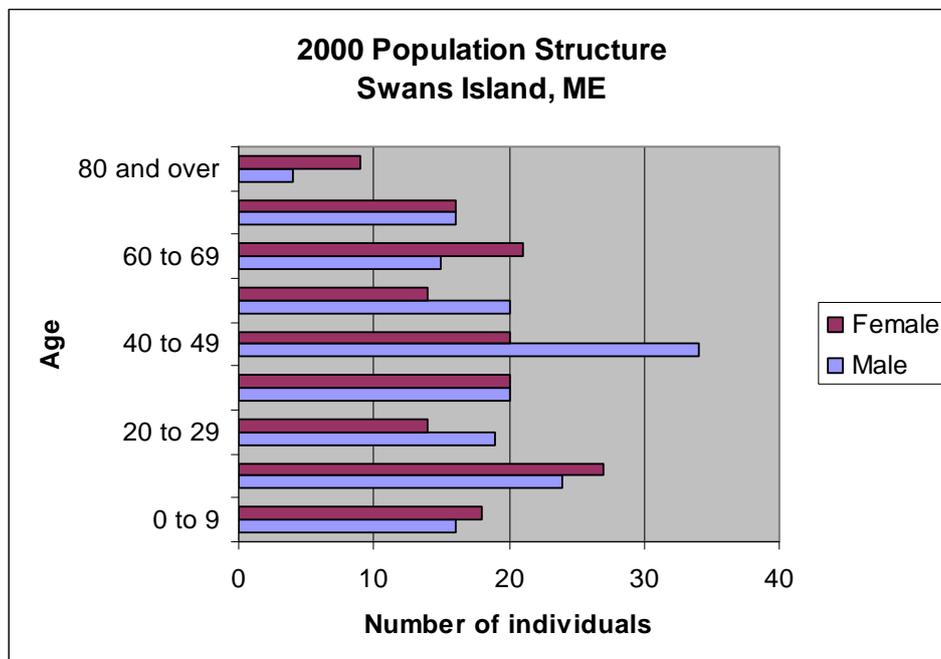


Figure 1. Swan’s Island’s population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (98.2%), with 0.3% of residents black or African American, none Asian, none Native American, and none Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). There were no Hispanic/Latino in Swan’s Island (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (46.9%), Scottish (16.6%), French (16.0%), and German (11%). With regard to region of birth, 72.4%

³ While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

⁴ These and all census data, unless otherwise referenced, can be found at U.S. Census: American Factfinder 2000 <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>; census data used are for Swans Island town (cited Jul 2007)

were born in Maine, 26.1% were born in a different state and 0% was born outside of the U.S. (including 0.6% who were not United States citizens).

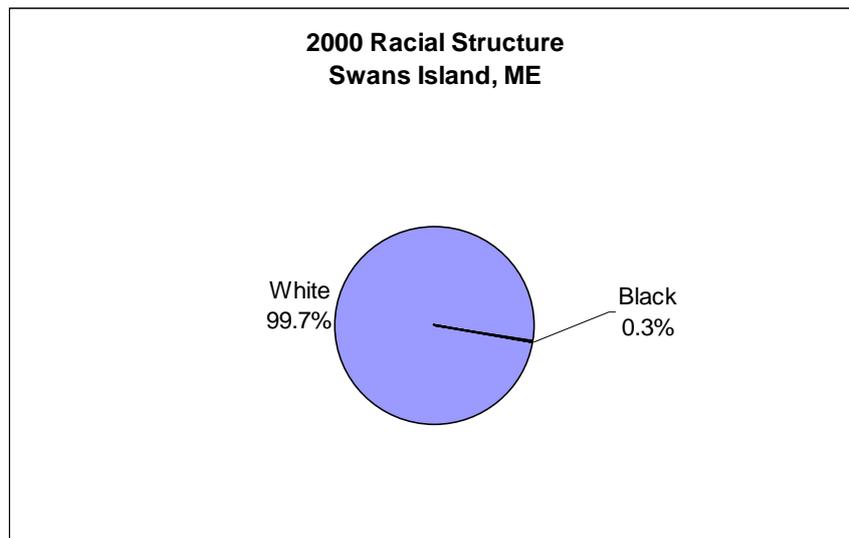


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

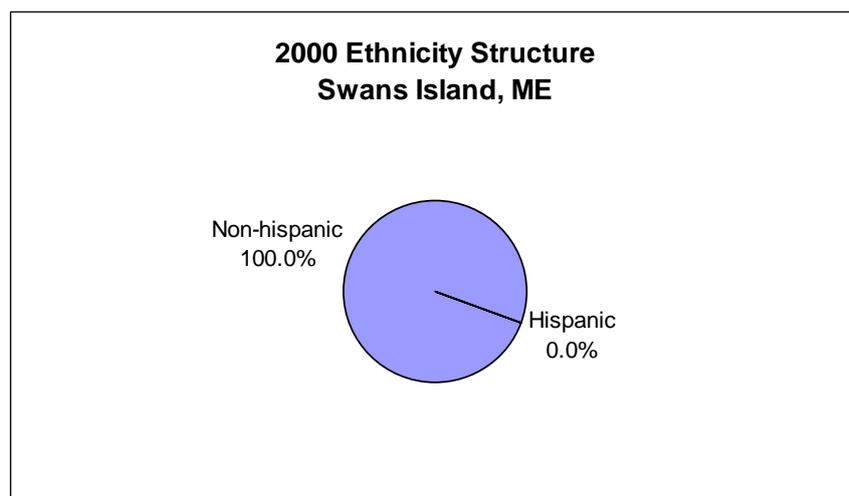


Figure 2. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 92.2% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 7.8% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, including 3.8% of the population who spoke English less than “very well” according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 80.4% were high school graduates or higher and 24.4% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 12.1% did not reach ninth grade, 7.8% attended some high school but did not graduate, 37.5% completed high school, 18.1% had some college with no degree, 6% received an associate’s degree, 13.4% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 5.2% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religion percentages are not available through the US Census, according to the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations and adherents in Hancock County was Catholic with 10 congregations and 6,292 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were the United Church of Christ (19 with 1,957 adherents), and American Baptist Churches of USA

(17 with 1,774 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 25.2% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

Issues/Processes

In June 2007, a new store was opened on Swan's Island, which has lifted the spirits of islanders who have been without a store for years. The store is run by Sheena Kennedy and Eric Greenlaw and offers "a little bit of everything", including canned goods, fresh produce, frozen foods, dairy products, and ice cream. A larger store in the same location is being planned by the current owners in the near future (Swan's Island, no date).

In 2006, the State of Maine passed the Working Waterfront Tax Law, to address the problem of working waterfront property being heavily taxed based on its projected market value. The goal of this tax is "to encourage the preservation of working waterfront land and to prevent the conversion of working waterfront land to other uses as the result of economic pressures caused by the assessment of that land for purposes of property taxation." The law requires the tax assessor to value the property based on what it is worth as working waterfront land, rather than what its market value would be if it were sold and converted to residential or other uses (State of Maine 2005).

Cultural attributes

Close to the ferry terminal on the island is the Swan's Island Lobster and Marine Museum. The museum features antique fishing equipment and "old-time fishing techniques for cod, haddock, mackerel, halibut, swordfish, herring and lobster. A century-long collection of lobster gear, historic navigation equipment, boat models and photographs are also on display. Additionally, there is a Natural History Museum next to the Lobster and Marine Museum (Swan's Island, no date).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

Swan's Island is a lobster town. With less than 400 residents it has three major lobster and seafood dealers: Kent's Wharf and Swan's Island Fishermen's Co-op which are also fuel and gas dealers, and Underwater Taxi. Swan's Island has also a lobster trap manufacturer: the Mill Pond Trap Shop (Swan's Island, no date). Swan's Island also has an Atlantic salmon, Atlantic cod, and haddock aquaculture facility located North of Scrag Island, and a finfish aquaculture facility located in Toothacker Cove (Maine DMR 2006).

According to the U.S. Census 2000⁵, 61.6% (167 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see Figure 4), of which 0.7% were unemployed none, were in the Armed Forces, and 60.9% were employed.

⁵ Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

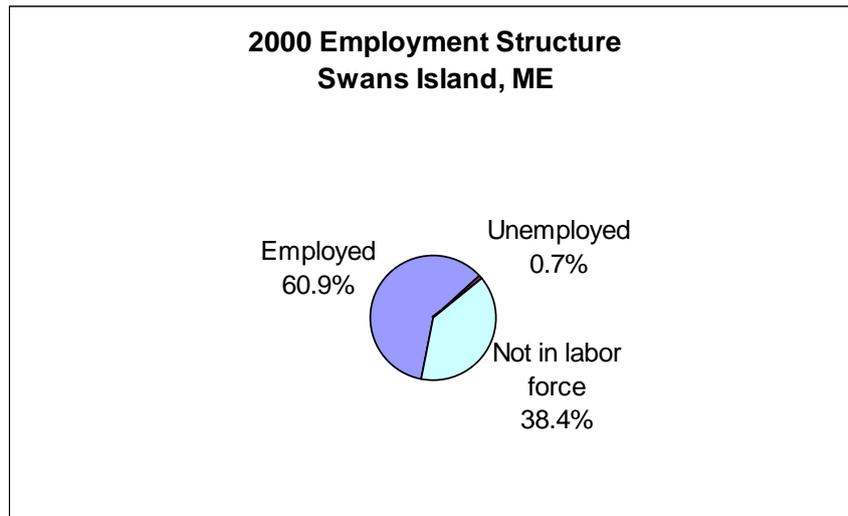


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 60 positions or 36.4% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 70 positions or 42.4% of jobs. Construction (15.2%), transportation and warehousing, and utilities (9.7%), wholesale trade (8.5%), and educational, health, and social services (8.5%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Swan's Island was \$28,438 (up 61.2% from 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and median per capita income was \$14,515. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 54.8% more per year than females.

The average family in Swan's Island consisted of 2.87 persons. With respect to poverty, 11.3% of families (up 37.5% from 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 16% of individuals earned below the U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239 through \$35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9 [US Census Bureau 2000a]). In 2000, 51.5% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Swan's Island had a total of 421 housing units of which 33.7% were occupied and 92.7% were detached one unit homes. Less than one-third (39.1%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, vans, and boats accounted for 4.3% of the total housing units; 85.8% of detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$126,100. Of vacant housing units, 61.8% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 16.9% were renter occupied.

Government

Swan's Island, like many Maine communities, has a Town Meeting form of government, with three selectmen elected in rotation (one/year [Swan's Island, no date]).

Fishery involvement in government

Swan's Island has a Shellfish Conservation Committee which consists of five members. The island also has a Harbormaster and two Assistant Harbormasters, as well as three Shellfish Wardens (Swan's Island, no date).

Institutional

Fishing associations

The fishing associations located in the Swan's Island area include the Downeast Lobstermen's Association located in Deer Isle, Maine, and the [Maine Lobstermen's Association](#). There is also a Swan's Island Fishermen's Co-op on the island. The co-op offers a place for the U.S. Coast Guard to do vessel inspections at certain time of the year (Swan's Island, no date).

The [Maine Lobstermen's Association](#) (MLA) was founded in 1954, and works to protect the lobster resource and the lobstermen's way of life. The association was founded by lobstermen with a goal of empowering Maine's lobster industry by representing lobstermen with a united front. The MLA is the largest commercial fishing industry group on the east coast, and represents the interests of 1200 lobstermen.

Fishing assistance centers

Although not specifically directed at fishermen, Island Connections provides free services to the elderly and people with disabilities on Mount Desert Island and the surrounding off-shore islands, including Swan's Island. The services offered include transportation to doctor's appointments and shopping (Swan's Island, no date).

The Working Waterfront Coalition is a statewide collaboration of various industry associations, non-profits, and government agencies with the goal to support Maine's working waterfronts. The [Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program](#), administered by the Department of Marine Resources, provides money to applicants such as municipalities, fishing co-ops, private commercial fisheries businesses and more, ranging from \$7,000 to \$475,000. The intention of the program is to preserve commercial fisheries working waterfronts and to help secure property for these businesses. As of December 2007, the \$2 million pilot program has reportedly supported over 400 jobs, 194 boats, and assured access to clam flats, parking, wharfage and fisheries in six towns (Maine DMR 2005). Voters [approved an additional \\$3 million](#) to continue the program in 2007 (Vote 4 Maine 2007).

Other fishing related organizations

The Swan's Island Educational Society oversees both the Swan's Island Library and Seaside Hall Museum. The organization is a non-profit, tax exempt organization "dedicated to the preservation of the past and the enhancement of the future of Swan's Island" (Swan's Island, no date).

The [Maine Fishermen's Forum](#) was founded in 1976, and its goal is to provide continuous opportunities to educate the public and the fishing industry about marine resource issues and fisheries, as well as to provide a platform for discussion and decision making. The Forum also holds an annual three day event which focuses awareness on issues that affect the commercial fishing industry.

Physical

The Swan's Island Ferry, *Captain Henry Lee*, connects Swan's Island and Bass Harbor Maine, which is approximately a six-mile trip that is forty minutes in duration (Maine DOT 2006). The ferry is a 17-car ferry making six daily round trips. The fares vary according to orientation, a round trip car and driver ticket purchased at the Bass Harbor terminal is \$41.75 and a round trip adult passenger ticket is \$14.50; the same tickets purchased at the Swan's Island terminal are \$22.50 and \$7.50.⁶

⁶ Community Review Comments, Dexter Lee, Swans Island, ME, September 27, 2007

The [Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport](#) (BHB) is the closest commercial service airport. It is located half way between the City of Ellsworth and the Town of Bar Harbor (approximately 27.5 miles from Swan's Island). For ground transportation access, the airport is located just off State Route 3. There are four active churches on the Island: Advent Christian (Minturn), Baptist (Atlantic), Church of God (Atlantic) and Methodist (Swan's Island). There are usually one or two small restaurants, coffee shops, and "take-outs" operating on the Island, some of them operate only in the summer season. Telephone service is provided by microwave relay and fiber optic cable, and electricity travels on underwater cables from Bangor Hydro, with local generators available to provide subsistence power to the Island in an emergency shutdown of some duration. In the fall of 1991, Swan's Island children entered a handsome new consolidated school, located in Atlantic. It serves approximately 30 - 40 children, grouped into grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 (State of Maine 2004).

Fuel for vessels is available at both Kent's Wharf and Swan's Island Fishermen's Co-op. There is also one boat hauling and storage business on the island, B & A Boat Shop (Swan's Island, no date). Mackerel Cove and Burnt Coat Harbor have anchorages and there is a public boat-launching ramp near the ferry landing in Atlantic. There are no public moorings, but there is a public tender float in Mackerel Cove. There are no public floats in the Harbor but the Boat House Restaurant offers rental moorings plus tie-up at their float for mooring rental and restaurant customers. The Swan's Island Fishermen's Co-op also has a tender float for customer tie-up (Rappaport 2008).

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES⁷

Commercial

Lobster and seafood dealers on Swan's Island include Kent's Wharf, Swan's Island Fishermen's Co-op, and Underwater taxi (Swan's Island, no date).

The primary commercial species landed in Swan's Island's is lobster, and the island has 200 commercial and recreational boat accesses. Three waterfront utilities are dedicated to commercial fishing use (Sheehan and Copperthwaite 2002).

The most important species landings in Swan's Island were lobster from 1997-2006, with 2006 landings considerably higher than the 1997-2006 average. Other landings were in the "other" species grouping, which for Swan's Island includes soft clams and crabs (see Table 1). The landings data for Swan's Island show steadily increasing landings, yet very little home port fishing. This is somewhat inconsistent with a large number of home ported vessels, which increased from 32 in 1998 to 47 by 2003 and 2004 (see Table 2). In most years, the number of owner's city vessels was similar to the number of home ported vessels, meaning that most vessels home ported in Swan's Island are owned by residents here.

⁷ In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

Landings by Species

Table 1. Rank Value of Landings for Federally Managed Groups

Species	Rank Value of Average Landings from 1997-2006
Lobster	1
Other ⁸	2
Scallop	3

(Note: Only rank value is provided because value information is confidential in ports with fewer than three vessels or fewer than three dealers, or where one dealer predominates in a particular species and would therefore be identifiable.)

Vessels by Year⁹

Table 2. Federal Vessel Permits Between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)
1997	33	23
1998	32	24
1999	34	36
2000	38	40
2001	39	40
2002	40	41
2003	47	48
2004	47	48
2005	45	46
2006	44	45

(Note: # Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport, # Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence¹⁰)

Recreational

While there do not appear to be any dedicated fishing tournaments or charter businesses on Swan's Island, the miles of coast and the fact that there are few facilities available to visitors may be an indication that only casual fishing takes place in the community. Due to the large number of access points on the island, it is likely that visitors and residents fishing recreationally from their own vessels.

Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in Swan's Island is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

FUTURE

Information on future plans in Swan's Island is unavailable through secondary data collection.

⁸ "Other" species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group

⁹ Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

¹⁰ The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

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