



ISLES OF SCILLY SEABIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

'Working with the local community and visitors on the Isles of Scilly to enhance their seabird heritage'

“RAT ON A RAT” UPDATE: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2015

Volunteers: Martin Auld; Will Brown; Trina Davies; Bob Dawson; Peter and Gilly Exley; Ros, Steve and Tristan Fletcher; Steve Henry; Randolph Hessing; Rebecca Howland; Amy King; Lorraine Leicester; Myriam Lynch; Ed Marshall; Irina Mereniuc; Maureen and Pete Mitchell; Holly Paget-Brown; Helen Raynham; Alec Taylor; Matthew Tickner; Nick Tomalin; Jess Vian; Lucia Watts; Gareth Williams; residents of St Agnes and Gugh. Thanks to St Agnes Councillor Richard McCarthy for helping edit the newsletter.

Great news! We're delighted to announce we've recorded the first storm petrel chicks in living memory to nest on St Agnes and Gugh. Two chicks have just been heard on St Agnes; two on Gugh. Back in July, as part of wider seabird surveys, adult 'stormies' were heard replying to taped calls. So in September under cover of darkness and armed with head torches, audio recorders and a deal of patience we went out again and this time caught the 'cheep cheep' of chicks. One fluffy chick was actually filmed in its nest site: head to the website and watch the footage. Pats on the back therefore for everyone involved in the project so far.

Every little action taken has helped lead to the return of nesting storm petrels on the two islands. In this second year post rat removal 27 Manx shearwater chicks have now also been recorded; last year the number was 10. Courtesy of volunteer Holly Paget-Brown you can also watch footage of Manxie chicks on the website.



Adult stormie on nest
Annet, Ed Marshall



Listening to stormie chick
Holly, Lydia, Jaclyn on Gugh



Dr Vickie Heaney and Jaclyn
with Manxie chick, St Agnes



Manxie 'wing-flapping'
Ed Marshall



Fluffy Manxie chick, St
Agnes, Nick Tomalin

Royal visit and LIFE mission. Thanks to our partners the Duchy of Cornwall for inviting us to say hello to the Duke and Duchess on their visit to St Agnes in July when they met the island community. We were thrilled to be able to tell Prince Charles and Camilla about our project work. The Prince said how wonderful it had been for him to see so many Manx shearwaters on the boat over from St Mary's. (It has been a bumper year indeed: at times during the day we've spotted more than 1000 Manxies rafting on St Mary's Sound). Thanks to Clarence House photographer Charles Sainsbury-Plaice and to Chris Hall for providing the royal photos.

Earlier we also welcomed LIFE Funding Desk Officers Lazlo and Tommy (plus Monitor Karen) to the islands as part of their ongoing review of the project. They were pleased to see the work we've done so far and the results to date in helping protect our seabirds.



HRH Prince Charles meets
Dr Vickie Heaney and Jaclyn



HRH Prince Charles meets
the team, St Agnes



HRH Camilla talks to Jaclyn at
'Island Hall' afternoon tea



Funders LIFE Mission to the islands,
Officers Lazlo and Tommy right side

Incursion response and training. We've said goodbye now to Project Officer Gemma Bowcock who recently got married at Old Town Church and is now back on the mainland with husband Joshua. We wish her well. In Gemma's place we are happy to welcome Lydia Titterton, who will be working three days a week as the new Project Officer. Many of you will know Lydia already because she's been with the project for 18 months as a Volunteer Ranger with IOS

WildlifeTrust and in summer was part of Vickie's seabird research team. Over the past couple of months we've suspicious do call the 'Rat on a Rat number' 422153. Thanks once again to all the community members who assisted us with checking grids, and for anyone who wants to join us please call to book a half day training slot at a time to suit you.

Special Protection Area (SPA) Seabird Surveys and wider monitoring. Seabird surveys came to an end in July and a big thanks to research assistants Will, Lana and Lydia for their tremendous efforts. Thanks also to the 26 volunteers who helped with these surveys and to the boat skippers who ensured access to the uninhabited islands. Not forgetting those who assisted the ongoing shrew and rabbit surveys and Ed Marshall for being happy to donate his wonderful pictures to the project, two are below. Meanwhile, Dr Vickie Heaney is still toiling away producing the final seabird report. It looks set to show mixed results, with some species looking definitely to be on the decline.



Volunteer Irina trains resident Nat in biosecurity checks



SPA research team survey Manx shearwaters, Annet. Ed Marshall



SPA team survey storm petrels Western rocks. Ed Marshall



RSPB Ecologist Matthew Ticker surveys shrews, Bryher

Youth activities, beach cleans, fetes and the media. We continued to deliver lots of education activities, including our 'shrew hunt' for Holiday Club, a 'seashore fun' activity for the Local Authority's Sibling Carers Group and a seabird boat trip for St Agnes school, courtesy of St Agnes Boating. We carried out beach cleans on Gugh: grateful to everyone who helped collect over 40 bags of rubbish and to the Council for disposal. And three hearty cheers for those volunteers who assisted us at the summer fetes and to all who came along to play the 'Manx shearwater Mark II Game'.

We also delivered a talk at Bird Fair 2015 (Glastonbury for Bird Watchers !) in Leicestershire. To top off an exciting summer of activities we also had media interest from Daily Telegraph columnist Robin Page, who gave a lively and lovely write up about the project; from Hazel Southam who interviewed Fran Hicks, Richard McCarthy and RSPB's Peter Exley about the community aspect of the project for Geographic magazine and from a German Film crew. We will keep you posted when they provide footage to the Island Partnership. Having our resident German volunteer Randolph Hessing handy on the day was a big help with translating the crew's instructions !



St Agnes school 'seabird boat trip' – we saw puffins!



Community beach clean on Gugh



German Film Crew film Jaclyn and volunteer Randolph



Geographical magazine talk to Richard, Fran and Pete

Coming up: 'Date with Nature' on Treco continues until 19th September. Join the 45 minute guided walks on the hour 10am – 3pm. Guides point out wildlife seen from the Scillonian III ferry on Fridays. We will keep you posted on the upcoming 'Apple Day event' planned for the start of October.

Jaclyn and Lydia

Comments and queries welcome: Jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk or 07881 517047. This partnership project is supported by LIFE, the EU's programme for financing key environmental schemes across the continent and the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund.

