



This pioneering, 25-year project is the largest community-based island restoration in the world. The main aim is to protect the seabirds in Scilly by keeping St Agnes and Gugh 'rat-free'.

The UK is internationally important for seabirds, but many are declining. Among many challenges our seabirds face, the greatest threat on land is predation of eggs and chicks by brown rats.

Young Seabird Ambassadors

The project actively involves the children and young people of Scilly as the future of our seabirds will be in their hands.



St Agnes schoolchildren monitoring Scilly shrews



Seabird ambassador Francis Hicks

Seabird Friendly Communities

The residents of St Agnes and Gugh are central to the development of the project and their support has made this work possible.

"This exciting work has wonderful potential for our wildlife, as well as long-term benefits for the community and local farms. We are keen to share our experiences with the many visitors who come to these idyllic islands."

Francis Hicks, Lowertown Farm



Storm petrel ©Joe Pender



Manx shearwater ©Joe Pender

Which seabirds are we helping?

Of the rich array of seabirds nesting in Scilly, two species are likely to benefit most, Manx shearwater and storm petrel. Other species, such as puffin, may also increase.

Seabird Friendly Tourism

- Boat trips around the uninhabited islands help people enjoy the seabird spectacle.
- Guided natural history walks, talks and events help people understand the seabird heritage of Scilly.
- Get to know your seabirds better, listen for the eerie calls of Manx shearwater at night and tell us your seabird stories!



Wildlife boat tour



Aerial image 192-043 © The Historic Environment Service, Cornwall Council



Vegetation surveys using a quadrat

Volunteers

Volunteers are helping us to understand changes in a wide range of wildlife during the project. There are many opportunities to help with surveys of seabirds and other wildlife. The benefits to the Scilly shrew of restoration efforts are of special interest.



Scilly shrew © Ben Lascelles



Project team working with the community

'Rat-free' Islands

Island restoration specialists, the community and volunteers have teamed up for the removal and monitoring of brown rats to keep St Agnes, Gugh and the uninhabited islands 'rat-free'. The project is working with the wider community in Scilly to understand the potential benefits to other inhabited islands.

Project partners and supporters



We need YOUR help to protect our important seabird heritage



- Report any rats (or rat activity) on St Agnes, Gugh, the uninhabited islands and on boats.
- Reduce food availability for rats on all islands. Dispose of waste appropriately and store animal feed in rat-proof containers.
- Become a 'seabird ambassador' and volunteer for the project.

Please contact us at ios-seabirds.org.uk or tel: 07881 517 047

The project is funded by LIFE, the EU's financial instrument for the environment, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is also supported by the Defra-backed Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).





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

How many rats are involved?
An estimated 3,100 brown rats were on St Agnes and Gugh in 2010 and this was unchanged in 2013. This is a average figure for inhabited islands of this size.

Is accidental poisoning possible?
The bait stations exclude most birds and animals. An antidote treatment (vitamin K) is used in the unlikely event of ingestion by domestic animals. All poison bait will be removed by the end of March 2014.

What about non-target species such as the Scilly shrew?
We expect the Scilly shrews of St Agnes and Gugh to benefit from island restoration work. Scilly shrews are insectivorous and although they can enter bait stations they do not eat the cereal-based bait.

How are rats removed?
The most effective and humane way is a ground-based baiting operation. Poison bait is placed in a grid pattern with 50m between stations. This is carried out in the winter with daily checks by a dedicated team of people. The rats die underground in their burrows.

Do rats have other impacts apart from on seabirds?
Rats have a significant impact on public health, property, animal health and crops, as well as affecting native wildlife. In 2010, the cost to the Isles of Scilly of rat control and associated issues was estimated at £200,000 (£15,000 on St Agnes and Gugh).

Why are rats a conservation concern?
Brown rats are not native to Scilly and were introduced in the 18th century. They cause local extinctions of seabirds. In Scilly, Manx shearwater and storm petrel are especially vulnerable. Rats also eat the endemic Scilly shrew. Black rats are not present in Scilly.

Island restoration FAQs

Keeping the Isles of Scilly special

The Isles of Scilly are protected for their inspiring wildlife and landscape. This heritage is highly valued by those living and working here, and is of regional, national and international importance. This rich heritage generates a significant income from tourism.



Puffin—a very popular summer visitor to the uninhabited islands ©Joe Pender

Five things you can do to make a difference

- Report any signs of rats on the uninhabited islands, St Agnes and Gugh, or on your boat.
- Avoid seabird colonies, keep dogs under close control and move away from birds showing signs of distress.
- Please follow restrictions on visiting the uninhabited islands as all are important for wildlife.
- Always dispose of waste properly and help keep our beaches clean - litter provides food and nesting material for rats as well as being a hazard for seabirds and other marine life.
- Become a 'seabird ambassador' as there are lots of exciting opportunities to get involved and learn new skills. Contact us at ios-seabirds.org.uk

Support from 100% of the community of St Agnes and Gugh ensured that the project could proceed. The project was launched in 2012.

- They are the inhabited islands least likely to be recolonised by rats.
- They have suitable habitats for nesting seabirds, with some already present.
- They represent a front line of defence to protect Annet, the most important seabird island in Scilly.

A seabird-friendly community
Across Scilly there is strong support for the islands' seabird heritage. St Agnes and Gugh were identified as the best places to carry out an island restoration project initially in Scilly and remove the brown rat because:

The breeding seabird population in Scilly has declined by a quarter in the last 25 years. Among many challenges our seabirds face, the greatest threat on land is predation of eggs and chicks by brown rats.

...under threat

- Storm petrels breed nowhere else in England. In 2006 there were 1,398 pairs in Scilly.
- In England, the Manx shearwater breeds only in Scilly and on Lundy. In 2006 there were 171 pairs in Scilly.

The Isles of Scilly are internationally important for seabirds, with 20,000 breeding birds of 14 different species (2006). A Special Protection Area, the islands are part of the Natura 2000 network, made up of the best wildlife sites throughout the European Union. Most of the important seabird colonies on the islands are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Two species are real 'Scilly specialities' and the UK supports a significant proportion of the world population (75% for Manx shearwater).

A special place...

Provide socio-economic benefits to island communities.
A 'rat-free' St Agnes and Gugh will support tourism reduced on St Agnes and Gugh.

Provide an opportunity for people to conserve these seabirds and gain new skills.
The project will enable more people living on and visiting the Isles of Scilly to learn about, take pride in and play an active role in celebrating and conserving their seabird and wider natural heritage. Children, young people, volunteers, residents and visitors can develop new skills and help secure a remarkable legacy.

Help protect seabirds and other wildlife.
Rats will be removed from St Agnes and Gugh and uninhabited islands maintained as 'rat-free'. Breeding seabirds should increase and there are likely to be significant benefits for other wildlife, such as the Scilly shrew.

The project will...

A pioneering, 25-year project that is the largest community-based island restoration project attempted in the world to date. The main aim is to protect the seabirds on Scilly by keeping St Agnes and Gugh 'rat-free'.
Over the first five years, the project staff and partners will work with the community, along with volunteers and contractors. After this, a local seabird community heritage group will carry on the work supported by the Isles of Scilly Seabird Conservation Group.

The IOS Seabird Recovery Project is...

Your Guide to the... Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project



©Bryan Thomas

We need YOUR help to protect our important seabird heritage

Together we can keep these islands 'rat-free'

Rats are the biggest threat to seabirds on land, please report any signs of rats on the uninhabited islands, St Agnes and Gugh, or on your boat. Call 01720 422153.

For further information visit ios-seabirds.org.uk

The Project partners and supporters

- RSPB rspb.org.uk
- Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk
- Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ios-aonb.info
- Isles of Scilly Bird Group scilly-birding.co.uk
- Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk
- Duchy of Cornwall www.duchyofcornwall.org



The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654 July 2013

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