



# 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: AUGUST 2014

*Volunteers; Tom Bassnett, Carole Cilia, Ros Fletcher, Steve Fletcher, Tristan Fletcher, Lena Grannelle, Sarah Havery, Vickie Heaney, Kirsty Hibbert, Amy Horn-Norris, Clive Knapman, Dilys Knapman, Ed Marshall, Joanne McPhee, Holly Paget-Brown, Abbie Pailing, Claire Russell, Lydia Titterton, Olly Watts, James Woodin.*

So far August has been another exciting month. We've been up to all sorts of activities; from biosecurity training on Wingletang to fancy dress at the summer fetes. We'd like to say a big thank you to all of you who came to support us at Pereglis Meadow for the St Agnes fete on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup>. We had a range of things on offer at our stall to tempt you with, from hand-drawn badge-making, wiggly sea life crafts, to our popular 'Storm Petrel Game'.

The toughest (and most colourful!) challenge though was the 'Seabird Coin Game' devised in collaboration with Five Islands School. It had been skilfully crafted over the course of a day by Miss Turner's DT class, with help from the pair of us responsible for this month's newsletter. We also took our stall over to St Martin's fete on the 6<sup>th</sup> and you'll find us the Bryher fete too, now due to take place on Monday 18<sup>th</sup>, having been postponed by the threat of ex-Hurricane Bertha.

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After St Agnes fete we joined a team on St Marys, of local and visiting bird ringers from the British Trust of Ornithology (BTO) for a magical night of storm petrel and Manx shearwater ringing out on the cliffs at Deep Point. To see these birds, which we are working so hard to protect, up close and to actually handle them was an amazing experience. While those of us with BTO licences helped to ring and record the birds, project volunteers had the privilege of releasing them back into the wild. All told over two nights we ringed no less than 170 storm petrels (including three birds that had already been ringed in France) plus three Manx shearwaters.



Making the 'Coin Game'



Volunteers assist at fetes



Ringing of 'stormies'.



Storm petrel



Manx shearwater

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Recently we've been carrying out surveillance and incursion training for Murray Guy and Rob Carrier, new rangers at Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust (IoSWT). It's great to have them onboard in the project. During the autumn we will be doing more training for islanders ready to help with incursion response. For some it will be by way of a 'refresher' along the lines of the course that 'Biz' Bell delivered earlier the year and will be designed to keep people up to speed with project developments so far .

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We have not been carrying out any ecological monitoring of wider species this month. But we will be out again for a final weeks monitoring next month, starting on Monday September 8<sup>th</sup>. We will be joined by students from Exeter University just before they head back to their studies.

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You may have noticed the solitary orange hat heading over to Gugh and walking round Wingletang on a regular basis. You may also have come across cameras hidden amongst the thrift on the islands. Step forward, project volunteer Holly Paget-Brown. She has been working hard setting up trail cameras in a bid to capture nocturnal fledging behaviour by Manx Shearwater chicks. Holly has been a great asset to the project this summer and we will be sad to wave her off on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Next time she comes to visit her family at Pereglis, let's hope she will be happy to volunteer her services again!





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Biosecurity training, establishing a monitoring grid



New IoSWT rangers Murray and Rob Holly with trail camera



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Various IoSWT volunteers have lately been toiling away, not least on what we have now dubbed 'Pitfall Friday'. The effort has been focused on sorting out insects found in each of the many ecological monitoring 'pitfall traps' on Agnes, Bryher and Gugh into their various species groups.

July 18<sup>th</sup> - 'Pitfall Friday' - saw what had to be the busiest pitfall analysis so far: 13 volunteers working in a nine hour relay, counting out the contents of more than 200 pitfalls! Big pats on the back to everyone involved, because thanks to these efforts we've now completed all the pitfall analysis right up to the project's next ecological monitoring week in September. Meanwhile, the project continues to liaise with local and mainland schools through field trips and talks.



'Pitfall Friday' team



Beach games and activities with Five Island School



Identifying seabirds with visiting schools

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A date for your diary: between **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August** we will be welcoming three guests from Italy. The trio are working on a similar seabird project on Tavolara, a mountainous island off the coast of Sardinia. It's not much bigger than St Agnes, and has just 14 permanent residents. By ridding their island of brown rats, the aim is to protect up to 50% of the world's population of the Yelkouan shearwater. This project has only just begun and our visitors are keen to learn as much as they can from what we are doing. We invite you to join us for tea and cake between **4:30-5:30 at the Island Hall on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> August**, so do come and share your experiences of the project so far.

St Agnes boating's 'Seabird Safaris' will continue each Wednesday afternoon between 1 and 3pm for the next few weeks. Next month the 'Date with Nature' guided walks on Tresco will return. They will run for a fortnight from Saturday September 6<sup>th</sup>.

*Lydia and Jaclyn*

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