



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 2014

Volunteers; Bob Dawson, Carole Cilia, Tristan Fletcher, Norman Harris, Kirsty Hibbert, Amy Horn- Norris, Tamsin Page, Lydia Titterton, Ed Marshall, Ed Anderson, Tom Bassnett, Abbie Pailing, James Woodin, Olly Watts, Claire Russell, Holly Paget-Brown, Emma Eberlein, Sarah Havery, Neil Duffield, Doug Page, Lindsey Butterfield and Liam Butterfield.

Thanks to all the volunteers who've helped with the project's action-packed activities this month. 'Seabird task force volunteer' Sarah Havery, who was part of the winter removal programme team, recently returned to the islands from the Caribbean. She popped into St Agnes School to tell the children all about the work she had just carried out in Antigua on Pelican Island, removing rats to protect snakes as well as seabirds. Lately we've also said hello to volunteer Holly Paget-Brown who'll be assisting the project for the next six weeks.

Ecological monitoring in July for wider species potentially affected by rat removal has been completed: that's for land birds, rabbits and shrews, invertebrates and vegetation too. During June and July we've had the pleasure of the company of RSPB staffer Tamsin Page; Olly Watts from the RSPB's sabbatical staff; RSPB volunteer Amy Horn-Norris; National Trust staffer Lindsey Butterfield; Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust volunteers Lydia Titterton, Norman Harris, Kirsty Hibbert, Abbie Pailing, James Woodin, Ed Anderson and Tom Bassnett plus project volunteers Liam Butterfield, Doug Page, Claire Russell, Neil Duffield and yes Sarah Havery.



IOSWT's volunteer team



Sarah, Neil and Ed carry out vegetation surveys



Liam, Lindsey, Ed and Olly collect pitfall contents



Tom and Abby check shrew tunnels

Seabird surveys have been carried out by Dr. Vickie Heaney, our own seabird ecologist. She says Manx shearwaters on Agnes and Gugh are still calling from their burrows, which means they're still rearing their chicks. The number of 'apparently occupied' burrows has remained stable out at Wingletang and a couple more birds have taken up residency further round the coast near Porth Askin. Meanwhile, the kittiwake colony by the Turk's Head continues to grow: up from a single pair in 2009 to at least 57 pairs this year. It's now the only site in Scilly where kittiwakes are breeding. They fledged 36 chicks from here last year so fingers crossed for even greater numbers this year. On Gugh there are no less than 418 pairs of lesser black-backed gulls. But this is considerably down on the 875 pairs that were there in 2006, let alone the 1123 in 2000.

.....

Other recent visitors to the project RSPB have been finance team members Adrian Oates and Ruth Sharman. They're the staff who keep an eye on the pounds, shillings and pence that make all this work possible. Also visiting was David Appleton from our project partner Natural England. David was part of the Lundy 'seabird recovery project' 10 years ago after which the Manx shearwater population leaped up by 250%. So he was more than a little excited to see the Manx shearwater burrows on Agnes and Gugh.





ISLES OF SCILLY SEABIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

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

Among those leaving us is the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's photography intern Ed Marshall. He's taken some fabulous seabird and other wildlife pictures, including trail cam footage of shearwaters at night.



Manx shearwater footage from Ed Marshall



Emma Eberlein and Norman Harris assist with Gugh gull survey



RSPB staff Adrian Oates and Ruth Sharman



David Appleton, Natural England at the 'Manxie' burrows

Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust volunteers Norman Harris and Lydia Titterton carried out the June monitoring check on all the permanent coastal stations. Again there was no evidence of rats; just a few nibbles from shrews. However, there has been another would-be rat sighting. This time it came from a visitor to Gugh. Thanks to Bob Dawson, initial surveillance was quick. Further monitoring was carried out by Tom, Abby, Ed and Tristan for which further thanks. Ditto to IOSWT Manager Sarah Mason and RSPB officer Sophie Thomas for co-ordinating this response. A false alarm.

.....

Gratitude renewed to all the following people who are checking each permanent station on their land: that's Rosie, Ross, Mike, Rick, Fran, Johann, Mark and Tristan, Tim and Sam. Also to Rick again because he's keeping an eye on stations by the quay and the various bins. John is doing the 'Spirit' and the 'Enterprise' whilst we carry out the job on the 'Lyonesse Lady' and at St Mary's Quay. All stations have a plastic card on the front so everyone can mark up when they've done their monthly check.



Date with Nature walks, Tresco



Mainland school field trips: St Just School



Bishop Stopford school listen to 'Manxies'



Five Islands Primary School talk ahead of Samson picnic

Finally, the project continues to liaise with local and mainland schools through field trips and talks, with visitors through 'Date with Nature' guided walks on Tresco and 'seabird safaris' with on St Agnes Boating between 1 and 3pm on Wednesday afternoons. With the fete season and more summer walks ahead, please do come and join in the fun!

Jaclyn and Lydia

Comments and queries welcome: Jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk or 07881517047.

In addition to the support from LIFE, The EU's programme for financing key environmental schemes across the continent, and the UK's own Heritage Lottery Fund, the Seabird Recovery project is also being supported by the Defra-funded Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

