



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: SEPTEMBER 2014

Volunteers; Chloe Airey, Tom Bassett, William Brown, Carole Cilia, Colin Day, Lindsey Death, Rebecca Etheridge, Ros, Steve and Tristan Fletcher, Chris Griffin, Vickie Heaney, Randolph Hessing, Kirsty Hibbert, Ed Marshall, Amy Horn-Norris, Holly Paget-Brown, Abbie Pailing, Rihanna Pearce, Luke Phillips, Claire Russell, Will Stubbs, Val Tingey, Lydia Titterton, Nick Tomlin, Amie Wheeldon, James Woodin.

Yippe! We are delighted to announce that Manx shearwater chicks have been spotted peeking out from their burrows and 'wing-flapping' on St Agnes and Gugh. They are the first shearwater chicks to be recorded on either island in living memory. Taking great care, Seabird Ecologist Dr Vickie Heaney, project volunteers and ourselves duly visited the burrows under cover of starlight on four separate evenings from August 29th to September 12th. The result –10 healthy chicks. Trail cameras have been set out to collect footage of the chicks' nocturnal behaviour. Just head to the website to watch it. Massive thanks to everyone involved in the project so far. Each part you've played has helped ensure these chicks have survived. Thank you again.



Manx shearwater chick at burrow entrance. Chick 'star gazing' outside burrow This chick had just been 'wing-flapping'

By this time of year adult shearwaters have already left their chicks behind to migrate back to South America for the winter. These chicks, left in a healthy condition by their parents, are now venturing outside their burrows to 'star gaze' and exercise their wings. By looking at the stars they somehow manage to log exactly how they are going to migrate back to the burrows they were hatched in when it's their time to breed. Once they leave Scilly they will live out at sea until they come back to Scilly to breed at between two and four years of age. After that they will migrate across the equator annually. Their lifespan is potentially 55 years.

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Thank you to the people who assisted with hosting our Italian visitors Giovanna, Massimo and Paolo last month. Like us, they are carrying out an EU LIFE Project. It is called "Protection of main world's population of *Puffinus yelkouan*". The key part of their project is to remove rats from Tavolara Island off the north coast of Sardinia. On its 600 mountainous hectares, Tavolara hosts 50% of the *Puffinus yelkouan* global population. Our visitors particularly wanted to learn about 'biosecurity measures' we've implemented here so far. They really valued meeting you all and learning about the importance of ongoing community support that is keeping St Agnes and Gugh rat-free. You can listen to their interview in the audio section on the project website.



Visiting Troytown Farm Community talk at the Island Hall Visiting Westward Farm Visiting Manx shearwater burrows





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You will have noticed more volunteers busying round St Agnes and Gugh. September is this year's final month of the ecological monitoring of the wider species. We were joined by Will Brown, Colin Day, Tristan Fletcher, Kirsty Hibbert, Amie Wheeldon, Val Tingey and Natasha Simmons. We'll now be analysing the pitfall contents and the rest of the data.



Surveys in the scrub habitat



Fixed Point photography



Invertebrate surveys: Bryher



Vegetation surveys; Foreshore, Agnes

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We have been carrying out further training for Rihanna, Rebecca and Will, the new Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust (IoSWT) residential Volunteer Rangers. During autumn we will be doing more training for islanders ready to help with incursion response. We will also be carrying out a repeat of 'Apple Day', beach cleans and 'bin friendly days' next month. For these activities we are going to be rejoined by last winter's Seabird Task Force volunteer Lindsey Death. You'll remember her from the rat removal operation. She is very excited to be coming back this Autumn. We've also just completed two weeks of Guided Walks on Tresco as part of the RSPB's 'Date with Nature'. Thanks to the team members who delivered over 50 walks during the fortnight and talked all about the project. St Agnes boating's 'Seabird Safaris' have finished for the year now. Three cheers for John Peacock, the skippers and Interpreter Darren Mason. Feedback from the visitors about Darren's commentary was excellent. Lots of people learnt about the project and our amazing seabirds.



'Date with Nature'. Nick, Luke, Amy, Natasha and Chloe



IoSWT and Lindsey, ROAR training,



'Seabird Safaris'

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There have been more potential rat sightings from four visitors on St Agnes, surveillance grids were put out for over a month. There was no sign of any rats. Alan Reekie and Jof Hicks have reported suspicious droppings, inspection found these were shrew droppings. It's 'interesting' to discover just how large shrew droppings can be! If in doubt always get in touch with us as Alan and Jof did. Thanks once more to all the following who are checking each permanent station on their land/boat/potential hot spots: John, Mark, Rosie, Ross, Mike, Rick, Fran, Johann, Mark and Tristan, Tim and Sam. Volunteers Randolph, Kirsty, Natasha and Johann assisted this month's permanent monitoring stations checks – again, no sign of rats.

Lydia and Jaclyn

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

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