

# The Shearwater

Issue 5 December 2015



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

## Storm petrel chicks recorded on St Agnes & Gugh – first time in living memory!

Last year we had the wonderful news of the first Manx shearwater chicks on St Agnes and Gugh. This year it has been the turn of the storm petrel. It's the first time they've been recorded as breeding on St Agnes and Gugh in living memory. Turn to Page 5 to read about how five 'stormie' chicks were recorded just two years after the removal of rats. This year we've also recorded 28 Manx shearwater chicks outside the burrows. Page 5 also explains how volunteers recorded these chicks, whether capturing the moment on trail camera or seeing them with her own eyes.

Read as well about all the other activities which have been happening this year, including the all-islands sea bird health check; the 'Special Protection Area' (SPA) seabird surveys carried out by the RSPB and, of course, read how we met Royalty!

As Christmas approaches we're already getting excited about January. Why? Because Biz Bell and her team are returning to carry out their final check for any 'rat-sign'. We are delighted to say that there's been no sign of rats on either island since November 2013. But Biz will be confirming the situation with use of a monitoring grid over a month-long period. She will also update our bio-security training and naturally she's looking forward to seeing you all again. Thanks to those of you who have been carrying out monitoring and reporting potential rat sightings to us. Do keep up the good work. Do report any possible sightings to the team by calling 01720 422153 and for any further information you want on the project just visit: [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk)

**Jaclyn Pearson— Project Manager, Lydia Titterton—Project Officer, Holly Paget Brown—Project Volunteer**



Above: Storm petrel chick recorded at St Agnes campsite: October 2015. Photo David Price

## Your Manxies and Stormies Need You!

Do you live on St Agnes or St Mary's?  
Can you check any monitoring stations?  
Are you visiting next year and can you assist us? Please get in touch.

**Phone: 01720 422153**

**[jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk)**



Above: Special Protection Area survey for all seabirds, Annet May 2015. From left Jaclyn Pearson, Matthew Tickner, Will Scott, Lana Austin, Lydia Titterton, Gemma Bowcock. Photo Ed Marshall.

### Project Partners and supporters



giving nature a home



The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust



ISLES OF SCILLY Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# A view from local resident and farmer

"At Troytown Farm we run a dairy, ice-cream business and a campsite. Our campers come here to enjoy the natural environment and the seabirds. The rats have been destructive over the years, so the project has already benefited all our operations here and we know our campers are enjoying the islands being without rats. They also regularly ask about the birds they hear at night and we explain these are the returning Manx shearwaters." **Sam Hicks, Troytown Farm**



Biz Bell (WMIL) talks to Sam Hicks 2014

## Royal visit



Jaclyn and Vickie meet HRH Prince Charles  
© Charles Sainsbury-Plaice



HRH Prince Charles talks to Jaclyn, Vickie, John Peacock, Lydia Titterton and Ed Marshall  
© Charles Sainsbury-Plaice



The Duchess of Cornwall talks to Jaclyn at the Island Hall about the project  
© Chris Hall



Smiles all round in the community. From left: Richard McCarthy, Trish and John Peacock, Jaclyn, Rosie Felton and Rose Bird.

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 their Royal Highnesses about our project work. Jaclyn Pearson and RSPB Seabird Project Officer Dr Vickie Heaney were introduced to Prince Charles and walked a short way with him discussing the project, before introducing him in turn to team members: Project Officer Lydia Titterton; Volunteer photographer Ed Marshall and from St Agnes Boating Project volunteer John Peacock. The Prince asked us questions about the Manx shearwaters and their successful fledging in 2014 and about the methodology of the winter operation. He told us how wonderful it had been for him to see so many Manx shearwaters from 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.

Our appreciation to Clarence House photographer Charles Sainsbury-Plaice for providing the royal photos. You can see some of the official photos at <http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk/latest-news/prince-charles/>. And again our gratitude to Hugh House for getting us an invitation to the event and providing such a wonderful day. (PS Special praise goes out to St Agnes school for its amazing performance of 'George and the Dragon' for the royal couple outside the Island Hall, which was duly pictured on the front page of the Western Morning News).

## Project Steering Group

<b>Paul St Pierre</b>	Project Supervisor RSPB
<b>Jaclyn Pearson</b>	Project Manager
<b>Sarah Mason</b>	Chief Executive Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust
<b>Richard McCarthy</b>	St Agnes representative
<b>Will Garratt</b>	Estate Assistant Duchy of Cornwall
<b>Kate Sugar</b>	Project Leader Natural England
<b>Julian Pearce</b>	Senior Officer: Physical Assets and Natural Resources, Council of the Isles of Scilly
<b>Paul Buckley</b>	Regional Conservation Manager RSPB
<b>Leigh Lock</b>	Senior Species Recovery Officer RSPB

## Stakeholder Visit



In July we welcomed LIFE Funding Desk Officers Laszlo Becszy and Tommy Sejersen plus our LIFE Monitor Karen Lunan to the islands as part of their ongoing review of the project. They enjoyed looking at the work we've done so far and the results to date in helping protect our seabirds.

From left: Martin Auld RSPB; Will Garratt Duchy of Cornwall; Richard McCarthy St Agnes and Gugh; Paul St Pierre, Nick Folkard RSPB; Ruth Sharman RSPB; Gemma Bowcock; Laszlo Becszy; Tommy Sejersen; Jaclyn Pearson. Photo Karen Lunan.

# Young Seabird Ambassadors

A key part of the Project is engaging and inspiring young people - Young Seabird Ambassadors – about the world of seabird conservation. This year has brought a mix of activities to local and visiting schools, to youth groups, colleges and Universities.

## Natura 2000 Day! May 21st.



Butterfly signs in support of the Day;

Above left: Blue Class on their boat trip;

Middle: Blue class and St Agnes school have a picnic.

Bottom: Five islands Nursery class sing and play.



Natura 2000 is the name given to the nature protection sites within the territory of the European Union, of which Scilly's Special Protection Area (SPA) is just one. We decided the best way to celebrate the day was to carry out youth activities for some of the islands' children and show support through the special 'butterfly sign' in our pictures. We took pupils from Blue Class, St Mary's for a boat trip to seek out seabirds, not least puffins. Blue Class joined local St Agnes school children for a picnic at the Island Hall and told them all about their boat trip. The event ended with a sing-song in Red Class – the nursery class back on St Mary's.

## Higher Education Field Trips

Second year undergraduates in Conservation and Countryside Management from Duchy College joined the Project as part of their field trip to the islands. We also provided a seabird workshop to Cornwall College Ecology students at Peninnis on St Mary's. Feedback from the students included: "Great to learn about our seabirds' in the south west".



Left: Duchy College Conservation and Countryside Management students. Right: Cornwall College Ecology students

## University Talks

We delivered talks to the 2015 South West Marine Ecosystems meeting (SWME) at the Marine Laboratories, Plymouth and to BSc Zoology students at the University of Exeter's Falmouth Campus. Both talks were well received.

Left: Talk to University of Exeter Zoology students

Right: Talk at University of Plymouth



## Isles of Scilly Council Extended School Services - Youth Hub Holiday Club.

This year we've undertaken lots of exciting activities for the islands' children as part of 'out of school' clubs. At Easter we led a 'seabird activity and egg hunt' on St Agnes. In summer there was a 'shrew hunt' and more recently we produced a 'wildlife documentary' on St Mary's during Autumn half term.



Left: 'Easter - seabirds and egg hunt' on St Agnes. Photo Helen McGuinness.

Right: 'Wildlife documentary' on St Mary's.

## St Agnes School

To continue to ensure the islands have no sign of rats, the school children are our eyes and ears! They check 10 permanent monitoring stations, assist with shrew surveys and recently they had Apple Day. Windfall apples were collected up by the children to remove this potential food source for rats. So if a rodent does return to St Agnes it'll be nibbling on chocolate wax in monitoring stations rather than on juicy apples. Last week thanks to volunteer Susie Taylor, they also had fun as part of 'willow wildlife' creating Christmas marine animals, including star fish.



Left: Checking permanent monitoring stations. Middle: Apple Day with Lydia and Holly. Photo Irina Mereniuc. Right: Willow wildlife with Susie Taylor (bottom left)

## Nature in music

At Five Islands School, Year 9's 'Nature in Music' project was a great success. The assignment involved making a video for the Seabird Recovery website using September's footage of the fledged chicks and adding sound and narrative to the pictures. The winning video on the website can be checked out at [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk). The pupils then took part in a field trip to hear the Manx shearwaters for themselves, visiting burrows at Peninnis on St Mary's.



Top: Year 9 Music pupils receive awards for their project work

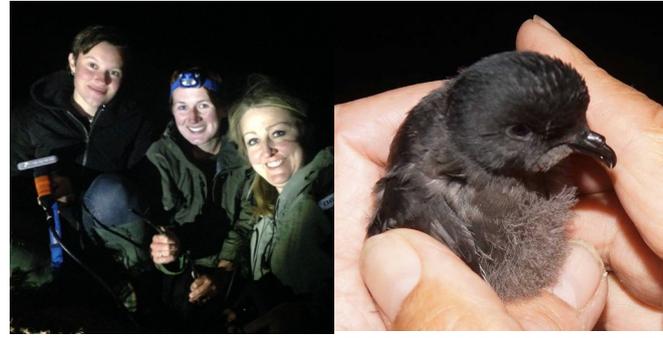
Bottom: Field trip to hear nesting Manxies on Peninnis



# First storm petrels to breed on St Agnes and Gugh in living memory

Unlike the much larger Manx shearwaters, which come out of their burrows at night to explore, tiny sparrow-sized storm petrels are more elusive. **Lydia Titterton, Project Officer** explains how we got the evidence of breeding success,

*"In July I was working as RSPB Seabird Project Assistant carrying out the SPA (Special Protection Area) seabird surveys across the islands and we surveyed potential storm petrel nesting sites on St Agnes and Gugh. Dr Vickie Heaney has monitored both islands for Storm petrel nest sites for 15 years and never had any response. So we were so happy to hear the adult storm petrels calling back from six sites on St Agnes! This implied they were nesting in these boulder gaps but we still needed to prove this. We visited the sites again in September when chicks had hatched to listen for the 'cheeping' of the chicks at night as this is when their parents return to the nests to feed them. Armed with a head torch and patience I was delighted when I heard the first cheeping calls from chicks beneath the rocks, it was just incredible! The next night I returned with Jaclyn and Holly and we managed to get both sound recording and video footage of the chicks. It has been my highlight of the project so far."*



Left: Holly, Lydia and Jaclyn delighted to have just heard and recorded storm petrel chicks with a burrowscope on St Agnes and Gugh

You can hear and watch the footage in the audio section of the project website [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk). We recorded five 'stormie' chicks in total across St Agnes and Gugh. Then in early October a chick was reported to visiting ornithologist and Lundy bird ringer David Price who was staying at Troytown Farm. He collected the chick and put it on a nearby wall away from cats. He also took quick pictures as evidence that this was a chick, as it was still downy. However, its wing feathers showed it had fledged. But had it fledged from nearby Annet or on Agnes? We cannot be sure. What a privilege though to get photos of this tiny little chick before it heads offshore to spend its life largely at sea!

## 28 Manx shearwater chicks recorded on St Agnes and Gugh in 2015

In 2014 we recorded 10 Manx shearwater chicks on St Agnes and Gugh. This was the first time in living memory they had been recorded. This year that figure increased to 28 chicks. **Holly Paget Brown, Community Heritage Volunteer Team Leader** was part of the team collating this evidence and explains how she used trail cameras to do this and how much she enjoys volunteering;

*"Having volunteered with the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project the previous year and enjoyed it so greatly it was hard to stay away once I had graduated. I particularly enjoyed my job of setting out camera traps in various locations around St Agnes and Gugh in order to get footage and proof of Manx Shearwater chicks fledging. This footage would not only prove the presence of Manx shearwater chicks, but enable the project to show footage of these elusive birds to wide audiences on the project website. At times it was challenging to find active burrows with appropriate places for the camera but it paid off and we managed to capture some great shots of the chicks and their behaviour. You can watch it at [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk). It was also great to see the chicks for myself 'star-gazing' outside their burrows."*



Manx shearwater chick St Agnes. Nick Tomalin

*"The small team are zealous, hardworking and committed which has ensured the success of this project thus far and makes volunteering with them a great experience. The breadth of the work I have been taking part in is wide and I have gained valuable experience in many areas, as well as priceless memories".*

## St Agnes School Puffin Treat



St Agnes Boating gave its own vote of thanks to the Project by taking island school children on a special boat trip to see puffins and other seabirds.

**John Peacock, St Agnes Boating** said: "The Project is safeguarding our seabirds which is important for ecotourism on Scilly and for future generations "

**Remy Lewin, St Agnes school pupil** aged 11 said: "It was really fun today. We saw eight species of seabirds including puffins and shearwaters. I am happy there is no sign of rats so the seabirds can breed again. It's important they breed and do well as they're what people come to see."

**Sylvie Hick, St Agnes school pupil** aged 6 said: "We saw puffins! They are my most favourite animals in the sea and I don't normally see them. I love their beaks!"

# SPA (Special Protection Area) Seabird Surveys



Photo: Jaclyn Pearson



**RSPB Seabird Project Officer Dr Vickie Heaney explains all about Scilly's full seabird survey carried out this year.**

*"This summer I led a team of three RSPB Seabird Project Assistants (Lydia, Lana and Will) plus 25 volunteers to carry out a full survey of the breeding seabirds in the Isles of Scilly. The last full survey of this SPA conducted in 2006 confirmed Scilly as the most significant seabird colony in the south-west, supporting over 9000 pairs. The survey was jointly funded by Natural England, LIFE and the Heritage Lottery Fund.*

*Juggling weather and tides with the help of intrepid boatmen the survey involved landing on as many as 50 individual rocks and islands in order to count the number of active nests. For most species, including gulls and terns, this was a straight forward case of searching the shoreline for nests with eggs in. But for other birds, such as fulmars, which tend to nest in cliffy areas, a count of sitting birds from the boat was the best plan. The most difficult birds to count were the Manx shearwaters and storm petrels – both of which nest underground. Initial analysis of the survey results indicates a mixed bag of fortunes for our seabirds. The results will be published in January and they will further inform us on how we can best protect our seabirds. It was an absolute delight to carry out these surveys and huge thanks are due to all the wonderful people involved. "*



Species	Trend 2006 to 2015
Manx shearwater, Guillemot, Razorbill	Significant increases
Great black-backed gull	Slight increase
Storm petrel, Puffin, Fulmar	Stable or slight decrease
Kittiwake, Common tern, Herring gull, Lesser black-backed gull, Shag, Cormorant	Significant decreases

Clockwise from top left: The SPA seabird survey team, Vickie Heaney, Lydia Titterton, Lana Austin and Will Scott; Puffin on nest, Mincarlo; Surveys on Tean; Herring gull: Matthew Tickner, Jaclyn Pearson and Vickie Heaney surveying Annet; Storm petrel on nest in between boulders; Lorraine Leicester carrying out Manx shearwater 'playback survey'; Shag drying wing feathers; Vickie gives Will, Jaclyn, Lydia, Gemma and Lana an introductory brief ahead of storm petrel surveys; Kittiwake on St Agnes; Alice Trevail and Will Scott monitor gull nests; Fulmar in flight returning to nest; Razorbill.

Photos by Ed Marshall (unless otherwise stated) .



# Bio-security: keeping the islands free of 'rat-sign'

Bio-security is all about preventing rats from re-infesting St Agnes and Gugh and what to do should one or more be found on the islands. **Lydia Titterton, Project Officer** leads a team of 20 volunteers trained across St Agnes and Gugh and St Marys. Bio-security to keep the island rat-free can be summarised in four stages;



Gugh Beach August 2015



**1. Prevention.** There is bait on board boats which serve the islands (including the Lyonesse Lady and St Agnes Boating's vessels.) The local community has been trained a. to check high risk items being brought ashore (eg hay and animal feed) b. to ensure good waste management practice by using compost bins and secure wheelie bins and c. to remain vigilant at all times for sign of rats and to encourage all visitors to be equally vigilant.

**Beach cleans and Apple Day** are just two activities which also aim to reduce food and rat harbourage materials on the islands. Thanks to all those who have joined in these events. In August we collected 40 bags from Gugh alone.

**2. Detection.** Permanent monitoring stations are examined every two to three weeks. The chocolate wax inside the permanent boxes around the coastline is checked for teeth marks. So far any marks have only been from shrews. Thanks to those of you on the islands who have been checking inland monitoring stations on your land. Recently another four members of the community have come forward to check a section of the coastal stations—thank you.

The 'Rat On A Rat' (ROAR) hotline number (tel: 01720 422153) enables visitors and residents to call about anything suspiciously 'ratty'.

**3. Surveillance.** This is where someone trained in bio-security measures carries out an investigation into a suspected rat sign.

**4. Incursion response.** A 300 metre-wide, 50 station monitoring grid is set out with flavoured wax or tracking tunnels. This is checked over a monthly period. If there is a rat, it will be detected. If there is no sign, then the grid is brought in after that month and vigilance returns. So far the ROAR hotline has had **28 calls**, all of which we have set up grids for. Thankfully all have been false alarms. Pats on the back to all the volunteers who have assisted with these grid set-ups and checks. And please do get in touch if you would like to join our volunteer team.



Map of 28 'ROAR' sites. Yellow marks were call outs in 2014 and the pink marks were call outs in 2015.

## Networking talks and visits



We have also been letting others know about the project. In Leeds back in the Spring we gave a talk at the RSPB's Conservation Conference. Jamie Wyver, RSPB PR Executive gave a presentation at 'Bird Fair', Rutland's self-styled 'Glastonbury for Bird Watchers.' Across the Irish Sea Jaclyn went on a busman's holiday to Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland's only inhabited island with a permanent population similar to St Agnes.

This Autumn, Project Supervisor Paul St Pierre together with Jaclyn visited the Shiant Isles in the Outer Hebrides. These islands have their own Recovery Project too. They are similar in size to St Agnes and Gugh but are uninhabited and their high cliffs set different challenges. Paul and Jaclyn helped set up part of the baiting grid and it was great to see the team members of Wildlife Management International and catch up with Biz Bell ahead of her return to Scilly. Thanks are due to RSPB's Phil, Charlie, Robin and Tom for their hospitality. It was also great to exchange advice on these operations. On her return Jaclyn gave a presentation to the Isles of Scilly Bird Group and then at the RSPB's Regional Christmas meeting in Exeter.



From left: Jaclyn's talk at the recent RSPB Christmas meeting; Jaclyn with Mike Clarke, Chief Executive and Martin Harper, Director of Conservation at the RSPB Conservation conference; Jamie Wyver at 'Bird Fair' this summer; Jaclyn with RSPB warden Liam McFaul on Rathlin Island; Jaclyn and Paul assisting with the Shiant Isles Seabird Recovery Project - from left: Paul St Pierre; Johnny Tayton (WMIL), Jack Ibbotson (WMIL), Phil Taylor (RSPB Scotland), Jaclyn Pearson; Biz Bell (WMIL), Robin Reid (RSPB Scotland); Bottom right: Garbh Eilean on the Shiant Islands.

# Monitoring of shrews, rabbits and fixed point photography

Other surveys being carried out on St Agnes and Gugh are designed to monitor changes to rabbit and shrew numbers, to species of vegetation, to invertebrates and to land birds. In 2013 'baseline surveys' were carried out by Spalding Associates. In 2014 project staff and volunteers did the 'first year' surveys and in 2017 they will carry out final surveys. But each year we will also continue to gather datasets for shrew and rabbit numbers .

Lesser white –toothed shrews (our Scilly shrews) are surveyed through use of tracking tunnels. They measure the prevalence of shrews via their footprints within four separate habitats, over three different nights and on each island. As shrews are insectivorous, the bait used inside these tunnels is blowfly larvae. Our Control Site for this work is on Bryher. Rabbits are surveyed via 45 minute night time transects. This time reflections of rabbits' eyes in a powerful head torch give the number of rabbits present within five separate habitats on each island. As there were no rabbits on Bryher in 2014, the control site used is on St Marys. Below is a summary of the trends so far.

Shrew surveys		
Gugh ↑↑	St Agnes ↑↑	Bryher ↓↓
Total number of tunnels with shrew prints in them has continued to increase;  <b>12/120 (9.9%)</b> tunnels in 2013 <b>75/120 (62%)</b> tunnels in 2014 <b>86/120 (71%)</b> tunnels in 2015	Total number of tunnels with shrew prints in them has continued to increase;  <b>3/120 (2.5%)</b> tunnels in 2013 <b>22/120 (18.3%)</b> tunnels in 2014 <b>32/120 (26.6%)</b> tunnels in 2015	Total number of tunnels with shrew prints in them decreased in both 2014 and 2015 from the baseline survey;  <b>34/120(28%)</b> tunnels in 2013 <b>6/120 (4.9%)</b> tunnels in 2014 <b>19/120 (15.8%)</b> tunnels in 2015
Rabbit surveys		
Gugh ↓↑	St Agnes ↓↑	St Mary's ↓↑
From 2013 to 2014 rabbits on Gugh <b>decreased by 58%</b> From 2013 to 2015 rabbits on Gugh <b>increased by 35%</b>	From 2013 to 2014 rabbits <b>decreased by 20%</b> From 2013 to 2015 rabbits <b>increased by 51%</b>	From 2013 to 2014 rabbits <b>decreased by 34%</b> From 2013 to 2015 rabbits <b>increased by 10%</b>



From top: Matthew Tickner, RSPB at surveying control site, Bryher; Nick Tomalin taking fixed point photos ,Gugh; Maureen and Pete Mitchell carrying out shrew surveys, Bryher; Miriam Lynch, Amy King and Lucia Watts assisting on St Agnes

We are also continuing to take fixed point photos each year, which should show any changes in the landscape and whether these can be attributed to rat removal. As well as to Spaldings and the many volunteers who assisted with the surveys this year, our gratitude also goes out to campsites on both St Agnes and Bryher, to the Judson family on St Agnes and to Issy Tibbs on Bryher for storing equipment in their barns. Again, if you are interested in helping with this survey work, please do get in touch.

## Media coverage of the project

This year we have continued to attract considerable media interest: not least from Radio Scilly, the Cornishman and the Western Morning News. 'Geographical' magazine featured the project in their Autumn edition. Journalist Hazel Southam interviewed Jaclyn and RSPB's Peter Exley about the project and talked to Richard McCarthy and Fran Hicks on the community aspect of the project. Encouraged by Richard and Fran, Daily Telegraph columnist Robin Page gave a lively and lovely write up about the project.



From left; Geographical magazine, Fran Hicks, Photographer Clare Kendall, Peter Exley RSPB, Journalist Hazel Southam, Richard McCarthy; German Film crew interview Jaclyn about the project on St Agnes; 'Birdwatch' magazine interview the team, from left Holly, Lydia, Jonny Rankin and his Dad, and Jaclyn; Jaclyn using the IP line at the Duchy of Cornwall Harbour Office to talk to BBC Radio 4's 'Farming Today'

Footage of the seabirds from our seabird surveys made it on to the BBC Natural History series 'Big Blue UK'. 'Birdwatch' magazine also visited, interviewing the team, learning about the project and hearing why the islands are so important during October migration. A German film crew filmed the project. We'll keep you posted when they provide promised 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! BBC Radio Cornwall, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Bristol all featured an interview with Jaclyn as part of 'Date with Nature' activities while the BBC Radio Four 'Farming Today' programme interviewed Jaclyn live about rat removal and the increase in Scilly shrew numbers.

# Scilly's Seabird Recovery Project—the Volunteers' story

All told the project has had over 100 volunteers assisting with the project. We cannot thank you all enough. Here is just a taste of the feedback from some of those volunteers. So if you are interested in volunteering, do please contact us. We'd be happy to explain the various opportunities available.

*"My journey with IOSSRP was about witnessing people working hard for a cause they relate to. It was about having my soul smile when a fluffy Manx Shearwater chick on Gugh (there only because IOSSRP successfully keeps the island rat free) tried to climb on my foot. It was about learning about wildlife and nature conservation in UK and abroad.*

*It was about realising that children do enjoy listening when I tell them about nature and that tourists would invest their holiday time in volunteering for a conservation project, if given the chance. It was about bonding with amazing people, of different life backgrounds, but with this one passion that sings to my heart: nature conservation. I take with me all the memories I made, the inspiration that filled by heart, the lessons learnt and I will build upon them. And so I move on, honoured to have been a volunteer within IOSSRP, further guided by the fact that each action, no matter how small one might perceive it, counts when it comes to giving nature back a home."*

**Irina Mereniuc,**

**From the Republic of Moldova. Irina worked in the tourism trade on the isles of Scilly during 2015, volunteering for the Project in her free time.**

*"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do my sabbatical in such a fantastic place with such a great group of people. I learnt an enormous amount. It reminded me in no uncertain terms about the importance of good fieldwork and why I do the job I do. I will be back! "*

**Martin Auld,**

**RSPB Regional Director East Scotland and Sabbatical Volunteer**

*"One unforgettable return journey last year was on a mirror-flat calm sea, when the merest tip of a Harbour Porpoise fin or the lazy flapping of an Ocean Sunfish fin were easy to point out to the deck. So many of the people I talk to really do think that birds are brilliant and readily agree that the organisations protecting them are pretty brilliant too."*

**Phil Clarke, Scillonian III Ferry Wildlife Guide.**

*On 'Date with Nature' walks we talk about, and hopefully spot, some of the nature that might be encountered around the islands. But to be able to tell people about the amazing work happening on the islands right now is a great privilege, especially when the story gets a new chapter each year. Three years ago we had an ambition, two years ago we had begun, last year we had 10 Manx shearwater chicks, and this year we have 28, with confirmed storm petrel chicks as well. In the world of conservation you get used to talking and thinking long-term, but this project has shown what can be achieved in a short period of time by working together. I'm already looking forward to next year!"*

**Nick Tomalin, 'Date with Nature' Walk Volunteer Guide**

*"Volunteering for two weeks was an incredible and rewarding experience. I took part in shrew surveys using small mammal tunnels and ink recording, checked permanent rat monitoring stations on Gugh (no rats, phew!), conducted late night rabbit surveys and went out Storm Petrel surveying to St Agnes, Gugh and Annet. By far the most rewarding experience was hearing Storm Petrels replying to tapes of their calls from beneath the rocks on the islands. Only about 1 in 3 birds actually call back and every time it was so exciting to hear them! Working in the field and being part of the project has cemented my goals to work in conservation and protect species."*

**Lucia Watts, Environmental Sciences student, Southampton University, volunteering in summer holidays 2015**

*"After 30 years as a science teacher I find it most rewarding to continue to encourage people to think about their environment and realise that they are capable of making a difference for the better. I always look forward to the next trip as anything could turn up."*

**Dave Conway, Scillonian III Ferry Wildlife Guide.**

Above: Special Protection Area survey, Annet.

From left Martin Auld, Lana Austin, Lucia Watts and Lydia Titterton.

Photo Ed Marshall.

# Thank you!

It's been another fantastic year for the project. Having confirmation of breeding storm petrels on St Agnes and Gugh within such a short space of time has exceeded all our project hopes. Together we can continue to work as a team reporting 'no rat-sign' and safeguarding 'stormies' and 'Manxies' so they can continue to increase their numbers.

I just want to extend my thanks to **everybody** who has given their valuable time again this year; to residents on St Agnes and Gugh for their vigilance in watching out for 'rat-sign' and for sorting waste and freight; to visitors who call us if they see anything suspicious; to volunteers on the Scillonian ferry III, at education workshops, helping count seabirds or checking permanent monitoring stations - again thank you.

January will be a busy time with the final check for rats. So I look forward to seeing you all soon. Below is a note from Biz about what to expect.

In the meantime Merry Christmas to you all and lets hope in the New Year we get official 'rat-free status' for St Agnes and Gugh.

**Jaclyn Pearson, Project Manager**



Feliz Navidad (Merry Christmas in Spanish) to our Manx shearwaters currently wintering off Argentina! Drawn by Lydia Titterton.



Jaclyn checking a 'potential incursion' grid, St Agnes

## Biz will be back soon!

Biz Bell will be returning on 6th January 2016 to carry out a final check for rats. Jaclyn, Lydia and Holly recently went door to door on St Agnes and gave a community talk to pass on the following message from Biz herself:

*"Myself and 'ratter' team member Alex, plus two new volunteers, will be carrying out the final check for rats over a six week period. There will be other stakeholders from the project partnership coming out to help too. We'll be setting up monitoring points around the coastline on both St Agnes and Gugh as well as putting down a selected number of lines through the farms and central areas of the islands.*

*"We'll need access to gardens, but not houses. There will also be a good opportunity for everyone to get extra bio-security training, discuss any aspects of the project or hear about future plans. I look forward to getting feedback on how you all felt the removal operation went. We'll also provide information about other island restoration and species recovery work and why so many other island communities will want to learn about your project!"*



Biz Bell on the Shiantas October 2015

A date for your diary—the evening of **Wednesday 17th February** at the Island Hall—has been earmarked for a 'final results' **community get together**.

### Contact us

Web: [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk)

Phone: 01720 422153  
or 07881517047

Email: [jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk)



Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project  
Facebook Page

Please come and "like" us and follow all the project's events and updates.

Postal address:

The Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project

Trenoweth, St Mary's,  
Isles of Scilly, TR21 0NS

**We need YOUR help  
to keep St Agnes  
and Gugh and the  
uninhabited islands  
rat-free**



Huge thanks to Councillor Richard McCarthy for editing this and all project newsletters.



The project is funded by LIFE, the EU's programme for financing key environmental schemes across the continent, and the UK's own Heritage Lottery Fund.



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.