



Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project Conference 2017

St Agnes, Isles of Scilly
27-28 September 2017





Rafting Manx shearwaters inshore below St Agnes Lighthouse. Photo Ed Marshall.



Storm petrel by Lydia Titterton.

Contents

2. Purpose of Conference
3. Maps
4. Programme – Day One
5. Programme – Day Two
6. Project Staff
7. Community of St Agnes and Gugh
8. Funders, Partners and Operators
12. Seabird Task Force Volunteers
13. Seabird Heritage Volunteer stories
14. Residential and Day-Tripper Volunteer Stories
15. Project Legacy
16. Local Producers



Manx shearwater by Lydia Titterton.

Rat-free community celebration in the Island Hall, St Agnes, February 2016.
Photo Ed Marshall.



Purpose of Conference

To review the Project's methods and effectiveness and share lessons learned. Key decision makers will have the opportunity to discover the processes of rat removal work for island restoration and the key components for replication and transferability elsewhere in the UK, Europe and worldwide.

Attendees

Delegates include the community of St Agnes, the wider community of the islands, Steering Group representatives and their colleagues, plus conservation professionals from the UK, Europe and New Zealand.

Conference Aims

- To share information about the project on a first-hand basis with a large number of relevant individuals and promote valuable discussions.
- To share experience and ideas to help catalyse further work elsewhere in the world.
- To make a valuable contribution to the broader debate currently taking place about the impact of invasive alien species and the best means of encouraging island restoration.
- To bring heightened awareness among delegates of funding from LIFE+, Natura 2000 and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Apple Day 2015, reducing food for rats, St Agnes School collect wind-fallen apples. Winning photo in a competition organised for UK projects supported by LIFE. Photo Lydia Titterton.



Programme - Day One, Wednesday 27 September 2017

Talks – Part One

14:30 Arrive at St Agnes Island Hall.

14:40 Talks: words of welcome from the Project Manager and partners.

Field Trip – Part One

15:30 Depart for field visit.

15:40 Visit permanent monitoring stations with community members.

16:00 Walk to Troytown Campsite, discussion with local business and opportunity to support them (ice cream!).

16:40 Visit Manx shearwater burrows and storm petrel nesting locations (we will only see signs of the birds!).

17:15 Visit the ‘incursion shed’ to see tools the community uses to keep the islands rat-free.

17:30 Free hour: possible options - short walk across the sand bar to Gugh with guide, or a tippie at *The Turks Head* - the island pub.

Evening event - Project celebration with the community

18:30 Return to Island Hall for food and drink.

19:00 Welcome and a chance to hear St Agnes School ‘Keep the islands rat-free’ song.

19:20 Awards Ceremony.

20:20 Closing words for Day One with thanks to the community.

20:30 Walk from Island Hall to quay.

21:00 Boats back to St Mary’s.

End of Day One



Kittiwakes by Lydia Titterton.

Programme - Day Two, Thursday 28 September 2017

10:00 Meet at St Mary's Church Hall: leave luggage - just bring your day bag.

Field Trip – Part Two

10:15 Guides will walk you to the quay for a boat trip around the islands or a walk on St Mary's. Both trips will be led by RSPB and Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust staff.

12:00 Return to St Mary's Church Hall.

12.30 Lunch (provided).



Fulmar by Lydia Titterton.

Talks – Part Two

13:00 Talks include those from:

Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Chief Executive Officer Sarah Mason
 Wildlife Management International (WMIL), Senior Ecologist Biz Bell
 Spalding Associates (Environmental) Ltd, Adrian Spalding
 Lundy Seabird Recovery Project, RSPB Senior Conservation Officer Helen Booker
 Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project, Project Officer Vickie Heaney.

14:50 Closing words of thanks.

15:00 End of conference

15:30 Check in on Scillonian III Ferry.

Arriving for seabird survey on uninhabited Round Island, courtesy of the Duchy of Cornwall's jet boat 'Pegasus'. Photo Ed Marshall.



Project Staff

The following RSPB staff will be hosting the conference:



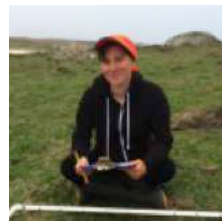
Project Manager,
Jaclyn Pearson



Project Officer,
Lydia Titterton



Project Officer,
Dr Vickie Heaney



Project Assistant,
Holly Paget-Brown



Project Supervisor and Cornwall Conservation Officer,
Paul St Pierre

Photos Nick Tomalin / Ed Marshall / Jaclyn Pearson

Many thanks to the following for their support: RSPB staff and ratters Sarah Havery and Amy King for being team leaders at the event. RSPB staff Natasha Laverick, Helene Jessop and Maureen Mitchell in the South West Office who helped book boats, proof-read materials and much more. Boating providers St Agnes Boating, Duchy of Cornwall's Pegasus and Tresco Boats. For venue logistics: St Agnes Island Hall, 'Turks Head' pub, Troytown ice-cream parlour, St Mary's Church Hall. For accommodation logistics on St Agnes: Rose Bird and Troytown Campsite. For accommodation logistics on St Mary's: Bylet, Northwethel, Browarth and Santa Maria. Also thanks to residents of St Agnes and Gugh for their suggestions and support for the conference and to all attendees for making it down to this far south-west outpost of the UK.

Shag by Lydia Titterton.



Community of St Agnes and Gugh

Some 85 people live on St Agnes and Gugh, making this project the largest community-based island restoration project in the world to date. Local residents have provided 100% support for the project, and 32 community members are registered volunteers carrying out monthly biosecurity checks to keep the islands rat-free.



Community members assist Manx shearwater surveys on St Agnes. Photo Lydia Titterton.

Community Seabird Heritage Volunteers

St Agnes residents and Seabird Heritage Volunteers assisting Day One's field trip.



Seabird Heritage Coordinators,
John and Trish Peacock (and
Seamus the dog)



Seabird Heritage Volunteers
Chris and Lou Simmonds



Seabird Heritage Volunteers
Sam Hicks and Tim Hicks



Seabird Heritage Volunteer
Rick Legg



Seabird Heritage Volunteer
Johann Hicks

Funders, Partners and Operators

Project Funders

The Project would not have been possible without our funders – thank you. The Project is funded by LIFE, the EU’s financial instrument for the environment, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It was also supported by the AONB’s Sustainable Development Fund.



Project Partners

The Project is run by a partnership of organisations:

RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)



The RSPB is the largest wildlife conservation charity in Europe. We have over a million members and together we help to give nature a home. Although we’re the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, we help lots of other wildlife too – making ideal habitats for birds also benefits other creatures. We work across the UK, saving species from extinction, protecting special places for wildlife and motivating people to add their voice to ours.

Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

We love nature – we’re passionate about wildlife and wild places. We believe the environment should be at the top of the agenda whether the subject is building houses, setting up wind farms, fishing our seas, transporting goods or educating our children. We never give up, we get things done; making changes for the better, for wildlife and for people.

The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654

Steering Group members: Paul Buckley, Regional Conservation Manager and Leigh Lock, Senior Species Recovery Officer

Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust (IoSWT)



Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust is Scilly's only local, independent, conservation charity and is responsible for looking after more than 60% of the islands. This is carried out under a 99 year fully insuring and repairing lease with the Duchy of Cornwall (which includes all of the uninhabited Islands and most of the coastline of St Mary's, St Agnes, Bryher and St Martin's) for the benefit of wildlife and people.

The Trust is reliant on grants, donations, membership and legacies to continue its valuable conservation work; with all monies raised and donated remaining within the Islands. Looking after paths and ancient monuments, restoring and maintaining habitats, all for the benefit of Scilly's wildlife and the people that visit or call Scilly home. The Trust is the organisation responsible for delivering the Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan whilst also providing learning activities and interpretation enabling people to connect with nature.

The Trust is managed by a Board of Trustees elected from its membership who provide the strategic direction for the continuing development of the Trust.

Steering Group member: Sarah Mason, Chief Executive Officer



Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Isles of Scilly are the smallest AONB designation in the UK. However, the Islands possess a diversity of scenery that belies their small scale. Panoramas of sea and sky are punctuated by lenses of low-lying land. The archipelago combines rugged granite cliffs and headlands, sparkling sandy bays, hidden coves, shifting dunes and saline lagoons. Over 6,000 years of human occupation has led to the development of the lowland heath, enclosed pasture, hedged bulb-strips, small harbours and quays, and scattered rural settlements punctuated by tiny townships.

The AONB designation recognises that people are an important part of the landscape, ensuring that its resources are protected, managed and capable of evolving in a sustainable way. Indeed landscape conservation and economic prosperity are inseparably tied in Scilly.

Steering Group member: Julian Pearce, Senior Officer: Physical Assets and Natural Resources

Nesting kittiwakes, St Agnes 2015. Photo Ed Marshall.





The Duchy of Cornwall

The Duchy of Cornwall is a private estate which funds the public, charitable and private activities of The Prince of Wales and his family. The Duchy consists of around 53,154 hectares of land in 24 counties, mostly in the South West of England. The Isles of Scilly have been part of the Duchy of Cornwall since its foundation in the 14th Century. The Duke of Cornwall has shown a strong personal interest in environmental issues for decades. The long history of the

Duchy and the Duke's own commitment to pass the estate down to his successors in a better and stronger condition requires a long-term stewardship approach.

Steering Group member: Will Garratt, Estate Assistant



Natural England

Natural England is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. We're the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. Our broad remit means that our reach extends across the country. We work with people such as farmers, town and country planners, researchers and scientists, and the general public on a range of schemes and initiatives. Put simply, our aim is to create a better natural environment that covers all of our urban, country and coastal landscapes, along with all of the animals, plants and other organisms that live with us.

Steering Group member: Kate Sugar, Marine Lead Advisor

Representative of St Agnes and Gugh - Richard McCarthy

Richard McCarthy has lived on St Agnes since the 1990s after working 25 years for the BBC World Service. As Secretary of the Duchy Tenants Association, Richard sat on Scilly's Joint Advisory Committee of the islands' AONB. Over the past 12 years he has been a Councillor for St Agnes on the Local Unitary Authority and more recently community representative on the steering committee of the Seabird Recovery Project.

Puffins in flight. Photo Ed Marshall.





Manx shearwater survey, Annet, 2015. Photo Ed Marshall.

Project Operators

The project operators' expertise and skills were essential to delivering the project.



Wildlife Management International Limited (WMIL)

Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL) is an ecological consultancy based in Blenheim, New Zealand dedicated to research and conservation of nature.

For over 30 years, our team has been working in monitoring, protecting and managing natural ecosystems both in New Zealand and overseas. Under our island restoration projects, WMIL has developed a ground-based bait station and baiting programme that minimises non-target exposure whilst still ensuring invasive species eradication. Using these methods, WMIL has successfully eradicated mice, rats, feral cats, rabbit and hares from over 35 islands around the world. Usually in partnership with local conservation organisations and resident island communities, these eradications have been the first step in the islands' restoration, leading the way for species recovery.

WMIL completed the St Agnes & Gugh brown rat eradication in the northern winter 2013/14 and the final check in 2016.

Spalding Associates (Environmental) Ltd



Spalding Associates carried out the ecological surveys of 'wider species': invertebrates, Scilly shrews, rabbits, land birds and vegetation to monitor and assess the impact of the Project on these species via a comparison at a control site on Bryher.

Seabird Task Force Volunteers

In the winter of 2013/14 the 'seabird task force volunteers' (or 'flaming ratters' as they became known by the community) removed the rats in a ground based baiting operation. Here are some thoughts from a selection of the volunteers and the careers they have continued forging in island restoration work.

"The project has been so important to me. Removing invasive non-native species should be an important technique in the future for restoring wildlife on islands. It has also been great to be involved in the largest community-based rat removal project in the world so far!"

Alex Cropper

Continues to be employed by WMIL and UK conservation organisations and currently assisting WMIL as part of the 'Pine Cay Save the Iguana Project' in the Caribbean.



"The wonderful experience I had was testament to the superb group of fellow volunteers, the hospitable community on St Agnes and the friendly staff. It is such a worthwhile cause to be part of."

Tegan Newman

Continues to be employed by UK conservation organisations and Universities including seabird research work in Madeira. Assisted WMIL in further projects in Scotland and currently works as Zoologist, Bird Island, South Georgia.



"It has been wonderful to get to know all the people involved in the IOSSRP project, the local community, who have been very welcoming, the people running the project, project partners and the numerous volunteers who have given up their time to help at this important stage. I feel privileged to have been a part of this incredible project, paving the way for a brighter future for the seabirds on Scilly."

Alastair Wilson

Continues to be employed by UK conservation organisations and spent 18 months as Zoologist, Bird Island, South Georgia.



"Working with an experienced and dedicated team has allowed me to learn a great deal about island restoration. I have had a hugely enjoyable experience volunteering on the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project and I look forward to seeing its long-term benefits."

Jack Ibbotson

Continues to be employed by other UK conservation organisations and WMIL, specialising in 'rope access' in Scotland and the Caribbean.



"It has been just fantastic to be involved in such a project here on St Agnes and Gugh, and I look forward to reading exciting reports about recovering seabird populations here due to these efforts."

Will Whittington

Continues to be employed by WMIL and UK conservation organisations on islands both in the UK and New Zealand and currently studying for a Masters.



"For me, being involved in the community part of the project has been really exciting and the skills I have gained led me to secure a role leading a similar project in the Caribbean, again working with the local school and community. Thanks to the project for teaching me so much."

Sarah Havery

Went on to work on island restoration projects in the Caribbean, returned to assist surveys on Scilly and now works in RSPB's international department on projects in the UK Overseas Territories, which has included field work on Henderson Island, South Pacific.



Seabird Heritage Volunteer stories

There are currently 32 Seabird Heritage Volunteers on St Agnes. Here are some thoughts of what the Project means to them and why they will continue the good work for years to come.

“The Seabird Recovery Project has been a great success so far, and we the community are excited to carry on the good work. We check permanent monitoring stations monthly and the ‘rat on a rat’ number can be called by anyone who sees anything ‘suspiciously ratty’ on St Agnes and Gugh. I have joined Manx shearwater surveys, and it really is wonderful to know these chicks are now surviving, thanks to the removal of rats. We hope to protect our seabirds for a long time to come.”

Trish Peacock, Twisted Bobbins and Seabird Heritage Volunteer Coordinator

“As the owner of St Agnes Boating I carry bait boxes onboard the boats and the crew keep an eye out for any sign of rats at all times. I will also be passing on information each year to other boatmen who use the harbours on how they can also reduce the risk of transporting rats. We have learnt so much about island restoration and we will continue the good work with the help of RSPB and Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust.”

John Peacock, St Agnes Boating and Seabird Heritage Volunteer Coordinator

“The project has raised cultural awareness of where birds are in our history, collective consciousness and the part seabirds continue to play in the community.”

Rachel Lewin, Downs Cottage

“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

Community celebration at ‘rat-free’ event on Perigliss meadow, February 2016.
Photo Ed Marshall.



Residential and Day-Tripper Volunteer stories

All told the project has been assisted by more than 300 volunteers. We cannot thank you all enough. Here is just a taste of the feedback from some of those volunteers.

“My journey with IOSSRP was about witnessing people working hard for a cause they relate to. It was about having my soul smile when I saw a fluffy Manx shearwater chick on Gugh (there only because IOSSRP successfully keeps the island rat-free). 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 my 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.* Irena worked in the tourism trade on the Isles of Scilly during 2015, volunteering for the Project in her free time.

“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.

“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.*



Storm petrel survey on Annet 2015.
Photo Ed Marshall.

“Volunteering for two weeks as a residential volunteer was an incredible and rewarding experience. I took part in shrew surveys, 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 2016* (second from right in above picture).

Project Legacy - Keeping St Agnes and Gugh 'Rat-Free' into the Future



"We are very proud of the achievements of this project, allowing these important seabirds to return to nesting successfully on our Island. We are keen to take on the legacy, keeping the Islands rat free." - *Chris Simmonds, St Agnes resident and Seabird Heritage Volunteer*. As part of his voluntary role, he assisted with the production and installation of the community signs which you will see on arrival to St Agnes.



THE ISLES OF SCILLY

SEABIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

Welcome to St Agnes and Gugh
We are rat-free!

If you think you've seen a rat please call
the 'rat on a rat' hotline number: 01720 422153

Soyez le bienvenu aux îles de Ste. Agnès et de Gugh.
Ces dernières n'ont en principe plus de rats!
Au cas où vous aperceviez un rat, veuillez téléphoner
au numéro suivant: 0044 1720 422 153



We are home to some special seabirds, the Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel.
Chez nous l'on trouve des oiseaux de mer extraordinaires - le Puffin des Anglais et l'Océanite tempête.
These birds breed successfully here because the islands are rat-free.
Ce sont des nicheurs réussis en l'absence totale de rats.

Do double-check items brought ashore for any sign of rats.
En arrivant, veuillez vérifier que vos bagages ne contiennent pas de rats.

Reduce food availability for rats and dispose of waste appropriately.
Veuillez ne laisser trainer aucuns restes de nourriture
et vous débarrasser de tous vos déchets judicieusement.

- NO ACCESS ALL YEAR
- NO ACCESS BETWEEN 15th APRIL AND 20th AUGUST DUE TO BREEDING SEABIRDS
- PLEASE KEEP DOGS ON LEADS DUE TO GROUND AND BURROW NESTING BIRDS



See the map (left) for areas where dogs should be put on leads and for areas to avoid during the breeding season.

À gauche, la carte vous indique les endroits où on doit tenir les chiens en laisse et les endroits à éviter pendant la saison de reproduction. N.B. les chiens en provenance de l'étranger sont toutefois interdits d'accès.

Project partners are RSPB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall and a representative of St Agnes and Gugh. The project is funded by LIFE, the EU's financial instrument for the environment, and the Heritage Lottery Fund.



WMIL
Wildlife Management
Institute Ltd

Local Producers

Most of the goodies inside your conference bag and the food and drink served are produced by local small businesses on the islands or in Cornwall. Many of these businesses based on St Agnes feel they have benefitted from the Project.

Conference bags

Westward Farm Gin, St Agnes

Gin made by the Hicks family.

www.westwardfarm.co.uk

Little Island Chocolate Co, St Agnes

Chocolate made by Maddy Hicks and Niki Hicks.

Vickie Heaney, Print Maker, St Mary's

Seabird mugs made by Vickie Heaney

www.vickieheaney.co.uk

Pot Buoys Gallery, St Agnes

Community awards and other gifts made by Emma Eberlein

gallerypotbuoys@gmail.com and 01720 423932

With **wristbands, notebook design and drawings** in this brochure by Project Officer Lydia Titterton and **Project bags** designed by Project Assistant Holly Paget-Brown

Refreshments - Day One

Snacks

Troytown Farm, St Agnes - ice cream

www.troytown.co.uk

Tregothnan, Cornwall - tea

www.tregothnan.co.uk

Evening buffet

Coastguard Cafe, St Agnes – entrees

01720 423747

Covean Tea Garden Cafe, St Agnes – pizzas

www.coveancottage.com

Turks Head Pub, St Agnes

Pasties and mini cheese burgers

01720 422434

Becky's Scilly cakes, St Mary's

Cakes and doughnuts

www.beckysscillycakes.co.uk

Troytown Farm, St Agnes - yoghurt

www.troytown.co.uk

Westward Farm, St Agnes – apple juice

www.westwardfarm.co.uk

St Agnes Post Office Stores, St Agnes

Drinks and snacks

Ruddy Shellfish, St Agnes – fresh fish

fish@harrylegg.co.uk 01720 423364



Westward Farm Gin by Lydia Titterton.



Seabird surveys on uninhabited islands 2015. Photo Ed Marshall.



Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project

'Working with communities and visitors to protect their important seabird heritage'



The project is funded by LIFE, the EU's financial instrument for the environment, and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Project partners are RSPB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall and a representative of St Agnes and Gugh.