

# The Shearwater

Issue 7 December 2017



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

## Project delivery phase completes and project legacy begins.

It has been an action-packed final year for the project. In this, the seventh and final issue of the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Newsletter, we will be providing final project delivery details and saying thanks to all the people involved in making the project such a great success.

Back in May, live to three million viewers, we starred in BBC TV's Springwatch programme. Items on St Agnes featured a Scilly shrew and a Manx shearwater in its burrow. A pat on the back for the St Agnes community for accommodating the BBC with hall hire, access, food, transport ... and on shrew hunts!

In July the team was up in Scotland attending the 'Island Invasives Conference' at Dundee. For the first time this global conservation conference was being held in the Northern Hemisphere. Jaclyn and project contractor Biz Bell were invited to give opening talks.

In September we continued to record increasing numbers of Manx shearwater and storm petrel chicks fledging. At the close of that month we hosted an 'End of Project' conference for 145 delegates over two days on St Agnes and St Mary's. The event featured a 'Community Awards Ceremony' for services to seabirds!

The project now moves from 'delivery' to 'legacy phase' with the aim of ensuring the islands remain rat-free. In November this task was put to the test when a rat suddenly jumped out of a wood-filled skip on the Lyonesse Lady freight boat as it pulled into Perconger Quay from Bryher. Protocols were followed to a 'T' and the rat was quickly dispatched. But as a result of this incident, movement of goods between islands has been reviewed with the IoS Steamship Company and its staff.

Thank you and a Merry Christmas to one and all!

Jaclyn Pearson - Project Manager, Lydia Titterton - Project Officer, Holly Paget-Brown - Project Assistant.

PS Plus a modest mince pie for St Agnes resident Richard McCarthy for editing this and previous newsletters.

Project Partners and Supporters:



Above: Delegates at the 'End of Project Conference' September 2017. Photo Ed Marshall.



Above: Islander and 'Seabird Heritage Volunteer' Rick Legg receives 'Seabird Hero Award' at the End of Project Conference from Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust Chairman Trustee Zoe Julian.



Above: The team with Springwatch presenters Gillian Burke and Martin Hughes-Games in front of the BBC Landover.

# End of Project Conference



Above left: SHVs lead field trip to see biosecurity methods. Above centre: SHV co-ordinator John Peacock. Above right: St Agnes school singing their 'Rat-Free Song' at the evening celebration event in the Island Hall. Photos Ed Marshall.

In the last week of September we held a two day 'End of Project Conference' on St Agnes and St Mary's. It went really well with 145 attendees from across Scilly, the UK mainland and other seabird islands including Alderney and Orkney. Biz Bell of Wild Life Management International (WMIL) was back from New Zealand to celebrate with us. Community and team members were praised for their efforts. There were reports and speeches. Special 'Seabird Hero Awards' were presented in the Island Hall and field trips arranged to enable mainland delegates to learn more about biosecurity techniques, with our 'Seabird Heritage Volunteers' (SHVs) showing them round our permanent monitoring stations. The dampening effects of drizzle were more than compensated for just around the shore from the Hall by the sweet and soft taste of Troytown Farm's ice cream.

Please head to our website [www.ios-seabirds.org.uk](http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk) to find out more about the conference, to see the 'End of Project Conference' brochure and to locate the layman's report in 'downloads'.

**At the evening awards ceremony in the Hall, to the accompaniment of a powerpoint presentation, applause and good-natured chuckles all round, the following community members received bespoke awards specially created on St Agnes by SHV Emma Eberlein.**

## **The Fulmar Award for Bin Appreciation**

Nominees—Nicki Anderson, Ben Hicks, Harry Legg, Christine, Mike and Aiden Hicks. **Winner - Harry Legg**

## **The Shearwater Award for Best Behaviour at a Training Award**

Nominees. Rose Bird, Johann Hicks, Nat Legg, Rob Seddon, Chris Simmonds, Richard McCarthy, Tom Smith, Grace Hicks, Mike Hicks, Rosie Felton, Tim Stewart, Luke Humphries. **Winner – St Agnes School**

## **The Storm Petrel Award for Help with Community Signs**

Nominees and **Winner – Chris and Lou Simmonds**

## **The Flaming Ratters Award for Best Use of Project Hat**

Nominees, Paul St Pierre, the ratters, Jaclyn and Tegan, Nicki Anderson, Vickie and her team, Jaclyn and Biz, St Agnes School, John Peacock, Sergeant Colin Taylor, Scilly shrew, spider, Ed Marshall, Doug Page and Richard McCarthy, Pam Hicks and Sheila Legg. **Winner – Biz Bell**

## **The Scilly Shrew Award for Best Inspection of a Wax Block**

Nominees, Mark Sedgeman, Mike Hicks, John and Trish Peacock. **Winner – Joss and Grace Hicks**

## **The Lesser Black-Backed Gull Award for the Best Beach-Cleaner**

Nominees, Carol Hick, Johann Hick, the Wildlife Trust, Emma Eberlein. **Winner – Johann Hicks**

## **Seabird Hero Award (x 3)**

**John and Trish Peacock** – for services as Volunteer Coordinators. **Rick Legg** – for use of land, movement of goods and waste management. **Emma Eberlein** – for the hardest to check monitoring stations and the hardest seabird surveys.

## **The Puffin Award for Making the work of the staff and volunteers so enjoyable.**

Nominees, all the community, Piers and Rachel Lewin, Tonya and Xanthe Hicks, Bernard and Alan, Wendy and Tristan Hick, Alison Legg, Turks Head, Jane Stewart and Mollie Peacock, Julia and Stan the dog, Jackie and Doug Page, Ross and Nikki, Sam and Laura Hicks, Tim, Sue, Sam, Kate and the cows, Jimmy and Su Paget-Brown, John Peacock. **Winner – combined Time, Sue, Sam, Laura, Kate and the cows for ice cream with a smile**

## **The Kittiwake Award for being the face which represents the IOSSRP project.**

Nominees, Fran Hicks, Pan Beresford-Smith, Ben Hicks, St Agnes school. **Winner – Fran Hicks**



Above: Award winners at the evening celebration. Photos Ed Marshall

# Monitoring Key Species

We witnessed another successful breeding season this autumn for our two key species. The changes following rat removal are summarised below.

## Manx shearwater

Manx shearwater breeding colonies have expanded with new sites and new breeding birds. In 2014, the year of rat removal, chicks were recorded fledging for the first time in living memory. This year, 2017, the final year of the project more than 40 chicks were recorded.



Year	Manx Shearwater Apparently Occupied Burrows	Manx Shearwater Chicks Recorded
2013	22	0
2014	26	10
2015	57	28
2016	74	32
2017	59	43

## Storm petrels

Storm petrels also returned to breed on St Agnes and Gugh. Their chick's calls were recorded in 2015, within two years of rat removal and again this was the first time they had been reported as breeding on either island. Sample nesting locations in boulder beaches and stone walls



Year	Storm Petrel Apparently Occupied Burrows	Storm Petrel Chicks Recorded
2013	0	0
2014	0	0
2015	8	4
2016	13	6
2017	14	4

have been selected to monitor breeding numbers. Colonies have expanded on to new sites with new breeding birds. By the September 20th recording date in this final year of the project four chicks had been recorded at study sites.

# Monitoring Wider Species

Shrews, rabbits, vegetation, land birds and invertebrates were all monitored by our contractor, Spalding Associates. Recordings were finalised in September. Nearby Bryher with an area of 129 hectares was selected as a control site because of its similar population numbers and size to St Agnes and Gugh at 149 ha. If ecological trends proved similar on St Agnes and Gugh but different on Bryher, then it would be conceivable that rat removal was the cause. Baseline surveys were carried out in the spring/summer of 2013 prior to rat removal and were continued through 2014, 2015 and 2016.



Above: Scilly Shrew

Overall the only trend that can be definitively attributed to rat-removal is the increase in the Lesser white-toothed shrew, the so-called Scilly shrew, a regular victim of rat predation. All other trends can't be put down solely to rat-removal, although increases in rabbit numbers are likely to be largely the result of rat eradication. A drop in Lawn Hopper totals on the other hand is probably due in part to the growing shrew population.

Particular points of interest from the invertebrate surveys were:

- 33 species of spider identified, of which one - the Red Data Book species *Clubiona genevensis* - was a first for Gugh. There were also first records for Scilly of *Pardosa agrestis* (a nationally scarce spider), *Argenna subnigra* and *Silometopus ambiguus*.
- likely first records for beetles on St Agnes, Gugh and Bryher for five species: *Cassida nobilis*, *Nalassus laevioctostriatus*, *Otiorhynchus atroapterus*, *Phaleria cadaverina* and *Psylliodes marcida*.

In 2015 a full 'Special Protection Area' breeding seabird survey was carried out. Overall, the seabird assemblage was unchanged from the previous 2006 audit. But most seabird species had declined in numbers, due to the same range of challenges reflected in declines nationally.

# Thoughts from the Community

“We feel proud to have been part of the project playing our part in protecting seabirds. It is important for the children to understand how they can safeguard their natural environment and continue to learn from it. Each month we check permanent monitoring stations for sign of rats, we carry out shrew hunts and we have loved ‘apple day’ and singing the ‘rat –free song’ at community events.” **Maddy Hicks, St Agnes School**



Above: St Agnes School winning the Shearwater Award.  
Photo Ed Marshall

"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**

“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**

## Project ‘Open Day’

Last May in celebration of both the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE Programme and of the Habitats Directive, the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project held an ‘Open Day’ and ‘Creative Beach Clean’ on the islands.

In 1992 the Habitats Directive created the EU Natura 2000 Network of Protected Areas, which also included sites designated under the Birds Directive. Scilly is one of these sites, designated specifically for the protection of storm petrels. At the ‘Open Day’ on St Mary’s quay, courtesy of the Duchy of Cornwall, visitors and islanders learnt all about these important and fascinating seabirds through chats with staff and various leaflets handed out. The special ‘Creative Beach Clean’ featured local artists and Project Officers Vickie Heaney and Lydia Titterton.



Above: IoSWT staff join the team at the 'Open Day.' Visitors receive information and leaflets. A beach clean completed the day.

## Project Steering Group

**Paul St Pierre** – Project Supervisor RSPB  
**Jaclyn Pearson** – Project Manager  
**Sarah Mason** – CEO Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust  
**Richard McCarthy** – St Agnes Representative  
**Will Garratt** – Estate Assistant Duchy of Cornwall

**Kate Sugar** – Project Leader Natural England  
**Julian Pearce** – Senior Officer: Physical Assets and Natural Resources, Council of the Isles of Scilly  
**Paul Buckley** – Regional Conservation Manager RSPB  
**Leigh Lock** – Senior Species Recovery Officer RSPB

# 'Date with Nature' and Seabird Walks



Above: RSPB volunteer Dave Flumm at the stand with visitors

'Date with Nature' walks have taken place on Tresco in June and September during every year of the project. A big pat on the back goes to all those volunteers who guided a grand total of 4,200 people on more than 380 hour-long walks and explained to them all about our seabirds and the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project.

At Question 5 on questionnaires visitors were asked: 'What will you do now, based on what you have learned today?' Answers included the following: A. Recommend the walk, B. volunteer, C. support conservation and D. learn/find out more. Thank you Tresco for your hospitality and Bryher Campsite and Tresco Boats for providing accommodation and inter-island boating.

## University of Exeter Carry Out Independent Social Evaluation

We have invited the University of Exeter to undertake their own independent evaluation of community participation in the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project.

"The aim is to understand the nature of such participatory projects and to learn from our experiences of island residents for future conservation and restoration projects worldwide. We will undertake this research project by interviewing residents of St Agnes and Gugh about their involvement with the project:" Professor Robbie McDonald, University of Exeter.

If we are to save much of our of globally threatened flora and fauna, working with individual island communities on these types of projects is going to become an increasing area of work. Getting independent community feedback can only help improve the way we work as conservation organisations in the future.



Above, left to right: Dr Caroline Keenan, Professor Robbie McDonald, Dr Sarah Crowley, Jaclyn Pearson and Paul St Pierre at the University of Exeter Penryn Campus

## Scillonian Ferry Guides and Seabird Safaris

Each year 12 RSPB volunteers take to the decks of the Scillonian III Ferry on Fridays to point out wildlife species to passengers en route between Penzance and St Mary's. Their enthusiasm and dedication in all weathers is much appreciated. Plus, their ability to spot no less than 32,238 animals during the 2017 season, including seabirds, mammals and fish. A summary of their success can be seen to the right.

As well as simply pointing out wildlife, there were ongoing exchanges with passengers about the different seabirds observed as well as their breeding habits, plumage, distribution, migration and conservation. Altogether, over the past five years, volunteers have made an impressive 398 boat trips and explained the project and seabirds to more than 9,800 visitors.

Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust guides with the aid of St Agnes Boating have provided similarly welcome support for project and visitors with their regular Wednesday afternoon 'Seabird Safaris.'

### 2017 Summary

Number of bird species seen: 52  
Number of mammal species seen: 7  
Number of fish species seen: 3  
Number of reptile species (leatherback turtle): 1

Total birds seen: 31601  
Total mammals seen: 621  
Total fish seen: 7  
Total reptiles seen: 1

Total animals seen 32238



Seabird Heritage Volunteers or **SHVs** are the community members of St Agnes and Gugh who together continue helping to keep the islands rat-free. We are more than grateful to all of you for the invaluable support you've given and continue to give.

Since the last update a rat did actually manage to return to St Agnes. On 10th November 2017, it was spotted on-board the freight boat 'Lyonnesse Lady' in a skip full of wood. SHVs who were on the quay unloading goods saw the rat leap out. They dispatched it immediately. The rest of the SHVs, at the direction of SHV coordinators, sprang into action themselves, checking within 24 hours all their bio-security stations around the island in case another rat was present. There was no further sign. The project team promptly revised bio-security protocols for moving goods between islands in co-operation with the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company. Thanks to vigilance and tight procedures this potential rat incursion on St Agnes was quickly thwarted. Jaclyn praised SHVs (picture right) Rick Legg (left) and Mike Hicks (right) for their instant response and commended the community for its continued assistance and watchfulness.



Since the last newsletter bio-security training has continued for SHVs, for wider volunteers on St Mary's and the mainland, RSPB staff and project partners:

- Project staff delivered bespoke training for each SHV at the incursion shed on St Agnes (where equipment is stored) to facilitate clear understanding of protocols and confirm tasks required to keep the islands rat free.
- Rodenticide Lantra training was delivered to SHVs and mainland RSPB staff and volunteers on how to use bait in the event of an incursion .
- In April 2017 a mock incursion response was staged with excellent results. SHVs changed the monitoring wax for dummy non-toxic bait within 24 hours and four RSPB team members and volunteers from the mainland would have been ready and able to arrive on St Agnes and assist inside 48 hours.

The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust has undertaken to raise the funds necessary for ongoing annual maintenance costs of the project. The RSPB is committed to supporting the SHVs with training designed to stimulate continued interest and involvement. The RSPB will also provide the resources required for any incursion response. For further information please contact Paul St Pierre Pierre (project supervisor and Cornwall conservation officer) at [paul.stpierre@rspb.org.uk](mailto:paul.stpierre@rspb.org.uk)



Top: Rick Legg and Mike Hicks thanked for their incursion response on St Agnes.

Middle: Community members undertake mock incursion response.

Bottom left: SHV Johann Hicks provides overview of how to look for rat sign in a biosecurity station.

Bottom right: Community SHVs on the meadow, St Agnes the SHVs check

Thank you to Killgerm for the recent bait which is now stored on St Agnes for use if needed in an incursion response.



# Lord Howe Rodent Eradication Project



Top left: Sooty tern inspects Jaclyn's hat.

Top middle/left: Lord Howe community member allows Jaclyn the privilege to get close to endemic Currawong (similar to a raven).

Top middle/right: Jaclyn handles the world's rarest insect, the Lord Howe Phasmid.

Top right: A Golden whistler (similar to UK's Great Tit) sits on top a 'Mutton bird' (shearwater) sign. The Mutton birds nest in burrows near the side of the road.

Bottom right: Lagoon of the settlement area of the island.



Following the 'End of Project Conference' Jaclyn was approached out of the blue with an offer she could hardly refuse: an invite to join the Rodent Eradication Project on Lord Howe Island in the Tasman Sea. The volcanic island (pop 347) sits 600km northeast of Sydney, Australia. Our project delivery stage completed, Jaclyn joined the Lord Howe team in November as Assistant Project Manager (Community Liaison) on a nine month secondment from the RSPB with the Australian Government. In just a few weeks Jaclyn has become fully immersed in her new role. As in Scilly, the species which this project aims to safeguard are petrels (Black-winged, Providence and White-bellied) and shearwaters (Little and Flesh-footed). Rat removal also aims to protect the Lord Howe Island Gecko and skink together with **the world's rarest insect**— the Lord Howe Island phasmid or stick insect. Find out more at— [www.lhirodenteradicationproject.org](http://www.lhirodenteradicationproject.org) and <https://www.facebook.com/RodentEradicationLHI/>

## The Project Team

The last day of the delivery of the Project was 17th November 2017.

Holly, Project Assistant remains part time on the project assisting the final funders reports.

Lydia Titterton, Project Officer returned to the mainland to her family. "I am now working in the Brecon Beacons and spending my free time running in the mountains."

Vickie Heaney, Project Officer (seabirds) is currently on South Georgia working as a museum assistant at Grytviken and giving talks about seabirds to visiting ships.

Biz Bell (WMIL contractor) "I am very busy over the next eight months – I head to the UK next week for two weeks holiday over the Christmas period (spending it with Skip's family) and then working with RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage on the Orkney Native Wildlife Project (on the stoat aspect) as well as preparing for the Final Check for the Shiant Isles Seabird Recovery Project in Scotland (end January to early March) and then heading over to the Caribbean to direct two more eradications (one rats and one mouse eradication) between mid-March and end July. I head back in NZ in mid-August to begin all our summer projects on petrel and shearwater monitoring."

We look forward to all working on a project together again in the future.



Above: Vickie Heaney, Holly Paget-Brown, Jaclyn Pearson, Biz Bell and Lydia Titterton at the End of Project Conference. Photo Ed Marhsall



# Project in Numbers for the Last 5 Years (2013-2017)

- 100%** of the community felt project had positively affected their day-to-day life, biodiversity and local economy.
- 68%** of the community felt that businesses had benefited from project.
- 47%** increase in the number of residents feeling more sympathetic to seabirds and the challenges they face.
- 8 million** people read about project in newspapers, magazines and newsletters.
- 6 million** viewers saw the project on TV, including BBC 'Country File' and 'Spring Watch'.
- 140,000** animals spotted by 'Scillonian III Ferry Wildlife Guides' collectively over five years.
- 1,600** young people engaged in seabird activities, including those from local school, out-of-school, visiting schools and university groups.
- 24,000** volunteer hours carried out collectively
- 2,000** volunteer hours worked by 'Scillonian III Ferry Wildlife Guides' pointing out wildlife to passengers.
- 360** community members from wider inhabited islands attended talks, walks and activities.
- 310** 'Date with Nature Walks' on Tresco
- 300** volunteers assisted the project
- 113** Manx shearwater chicks recorded due to removal of rats. None recorded in living memory prior to rat removal.
- 90** St Agnes and Gugh residents involved in project, the entire community
- 58** community biosecurity workshops held on St Agnes.
- 42** walks delivered across all inhabited islands
- 32** 'Seabird Heritage Volunteers' continuing bio-security and tasked with keeping the island 'rat-free' for the future.
- 15** Storm petrel chicks recorded due to removal of rats. None recorded prior to rat removal.



Far left: School children take part in a Scilly shrew survey. Left: Guided 'Date with Nature' walk. Right: Volunteers undertaking vegetation surveys. Far right: Volunteers assisting Manx shearwater surveys

# Legacy Phase of the Project

The 'Project Delivery Phase' is over. Enter the 'Legacy Phase:' keeping the islands rat free.

Paul St Pierre: "Over the coming years, it will be great to see how positively seabirds on St Agnes and Gugh continue to respond to the huge amount of effort put in by everyone to achieve rat-free status. The legacy phase of the project is very much about maintaining that status and the work of the community to date has been absolutely amazing. I look forward to catching up with everyone in the spring when I come over to see these wonderful islands of yours again."



To find out more information please contact Paul St Pierre (project supervisor and Cornwall conservation officer) at paul.stpierre@rspb.org.uk or go to our website <http://ios-seabirds.org.uk/>

## And Finally...Thank You!

"The successful removal of rats from St Agnes and Gugh was down to support from so many people. From the whole community, from our first-class contractors, from staff, partners and not forgetting the visitors to Scilly—I thank you all.

" We continue to record positive impacts the removal of rats has had on these islands' seabirds and on socio-economics too. Such positive outcomes have turned into pride and ownership by the community of the long-term legacy phase. For visitors, seabird interpretation (including the call to action 'Rat on a Rat stickers') will help keep the islands rat-free and the community itself has shown time and again that the sustainability of the project can rest safe in their hands

" It has been an honour for me to be the Project Manager of this five year project and I'm already looking forward to joining you as a 'Seabird Heritage Volunteer' when I return home to Scilly in Autumn 2018.

"My own personal highlight will always be seeing our first Manx shearwater chick 'wing flapping' and fledging outside its burrow on Gugh. It was September 22nd 2014) and the first time in living memory that such a display had been witnessed. I don't think I took breath for a good minute. But then again, seeing and hearing each and every Manx shearwater and storm petrel chick since has taken my breath away, each and every time.



"I am beyond proud of everyone involved in this project. Thank you for your part in protecting these amazing seabirds and giving them a much brighter future on the very special Isles of Scilly."

Thank you.

Jaclyn Pearson - Project Manager

Left: Jaclyn holds her special 'Rat Cake' at the End of Project Conference. Photo Ed Marshall.

Right: Jaclyn with a Manx shearwater chick. Photo Nick Tomlin



