



The Beaver Island Restoration Group fieldwork team on Channel Islands, August 2007.

Eradication of these two invasive species will enhance the recovery of native bird populations and their habitats, in particular tussac birds and the endemic Cobb's wren which are currently restricted to just a handful of predator-free islands. Highlighting the value of restored tussac islands and of the process of restoration itself is another aspect of this project. This is being achieved via the project's capacity to provide employment opportunities in restoration for landowners and farmers, and for them to gain experience in eradication and restoration techniques.

The project was initiated in September 2006 with support from Helen Otley, the Falkland Islands Government's Environmental Officer and a start-up grant from the FIG's Environmental Studies Budget. Additional funding for wildlife monitoring was received from the local conservation charity, the Antarctic Research Trust (ART). This was followed in April 2007 by a two-year grant from OTEP, which covers the majority of eradication costs. In-kind donations come from Falklands Conservation, the South Atlantic Invasive Species Programme and volunteers. The project is coordinated by Sally Poncet of Beaver Island Farm, West Falklands, who is also the landowner and has been involved in conservation and eradication projects in the Falklands and South Georgia for the past 20 years. Programme advisors include Steve Ebbert of the US Fish and Wildlife Service Alaska and Derek Brown, a New Zealand invasive species consultant.

Derek Brown visited the islands in April 2007 to advise on the overall eradication plan. The first year's rat eradication work was successfully carried out in August 2007 when seven islands were baited by hand-using diphacinone wax blocks. Five local people were employed to do this and are now trained up in island restoration principles and rat baiting techniques. We checked bait stations on one of the seven islands in March 2008 and found no signs of rats. Wildlife monitoring surveys were carried out in February and November 2007 and will be repeated in November 2008 and February 2009.

The next stage of the rat baiting programme will take place on Governor Island in August 2008 and will be carried out by a team of eight locals and Derek Brown. During this period we will also be checking for rat sign on all the islands baited last year. Fox eradication on Tea Island gets underway the following month, with guidance from Steve Ebbert who visited the islands in March 2008 to advise on the programme.

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The South Georgia Petrel Survey 2005-2007 (SGS201)

In 2005, the South Georgia Government commissioned an island-wide survey of the island's northern and southern giant petrels and white-chinned petrel populations with the aim of updating population estimates, distribution data and assessing land-based threats for these species. Funding was provided by the UK's Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) and the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, with additional support from Peregrine Adventure's Protect Our Poles Programme.



Raising awareness of the conservation aims and efforts by Government to protect seabirds was also a project aim. Ben Sullivan from RSPB/BirdLife International's Save the Albatross Campaign and Dame Ellen MacArthur (a well known British yachting personality) joined the survey team at South Georgia in December 2005 for two weeks. News items featured regularly on their websites and a documentary about Ellen's voyage and the birds (in English and French) was produced for British and French TV.

The research programme was organised by South Georgia Surveys (SGS) and conducted in collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). Richard Phillips (BAS) coordinated ground censuses of the giant petrel populations on Bird Island; Dr Tony Martin (BAS) carried out the white-chinned petrel survey; Sally Poncet (SGS) led the boat-based giant petrel surveys. Over the course of two breeding seasons 2005-06 and 2006-07, we surveyed virtually all of South Georgia's coastline, working from the 20m yacht *Golden Fleece*. The counts were done by a core group of four people (Sally Poncet, Tony Martin, Andy Black and Leiv Poncet) assisted by up to six fieldworkers who were a mix of volunteers and professional researchers.

In total, we made over 300 landings, walked over 1000 km, steamed 3500 km up and down the coast on all sides of the island and surveyed over 95% of South Georgia's giant petrel population, obtaining individual nest counts and a dataset of GPS-linked environmental variables (including coordinates, altitude, vegetation, presence of fur seals, rats or reindeer) for most of them. Provisional population estimates are around 17,000 breeding pairs of northern giant petrels, nearly 9,000 southern and just over one million pairs of white-chinned petrels. We also reviewed population changes over the past twenty years and found that there has been a significant increase (possibly as high as 37%) in northern giant petrels; southern appear to be stable or slightly increasing, and white-chinned petrel numbers are down 50% on the previous estimate.



The South Georgia Petrel Survey team at South Georgia, December 2005.

This research project owes its success fully to the hard work and commitment of the boat crew and all the fieldworkers: Dion Poncet, Russell Evans, Stevie Cartwright, Ken Passfield, Kilian du Couedic on *SV Golden Fleece*; BAS fieldworkers Richard Phillips, Tony Martin, Robin Snape, Catrin Thomas and Ash Morton; South Georgia Surveys fieldworkers Sally Poncet, Leiv Poncet, Andy Black, Carolina Mantella, Micky Reeves, Olly Watts, Ronnie Reyes-Arriagada, Christophe Barbraud, Ellen Macarthur, Ben Sullivan, Fran Prince and Andy Whittaker.

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Developing and integrating cross sector management of nature trails and tours both terrestrial and marine (STH201)

The OTEP Nature Trails project has provided training for tour guides which has equipped them with the skills to deliver informative tours in a responsible and professional manner. As a result of this project the walking experience of both visitors and locals will be enhanced.