

**Biosecurity aims to PREVENT invasive predators reaching seabird islands...**

- ✓ **CHECK YOUR BAG**
- ✓ **CHECK YOUR CARGO**
- ✓ **CHECK YOUR BOAT**



Many of our breeding seabird species are in decline. Even before bird flu caused widely reported devastation across the world, seabirds were struggling silently against many human generated threats.

It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of seabirds are accidentally killed by fishing practices each year. Climate change and overfishing is negatively affecting their food availability. Nesting sites on islands previously free of land predators, are being lost as rats and other mammalian predators are introduced by humans, often unintentionally.

To stand a chance in a changing world, seabirds require their breeding grounds to remain free from predatory mammals. Our actions decide the loss or success of seabird nesting sites.

Everyone visiting a seabird island is responsible for taking every reasonable precaution to prevent accidentally or intentionally releasing any invasive non-native mammalian predators.



For commercial boat operators in Scotland, the Predator Free Certification is a free biosecurity accreditation scheme, providing online training with a focus on integrating simple biosecurity measures into daily operations. This includes actions such as providing pre-boarding information to passengers about the importance of checking their baggage and having rodent detection tools on board. These tools fit discreetly on your vessel and are provided free of charge to accredited operators.

#### Hebrides cruises

"Protecting the wildlife of the Hebrides is central to everything we do, so joining the Predator Free Certification was a natural step. It ensures our cruises not only showcase this unique environment but actively contribute to its preservation"



**SIMPLE WAYS TO PROTECT SEABIRDS WHILE VISITING ISLANDS:**



#### 5 CHECK YOUR BAGGAGE

Check all bags, boxes and kit for signs of stowaways, including chew marks, holes, droppings and nest material BEFORE boarding the vessel.

#### 1 PACK ON DAY OF TRAVEL

Re-pack kit that has been in storage, particularly bulky items or items stored where rodents are likely, e.g. sheds and attics. Ensure that bags are zipped up and boxes are sealed.



#### 2 SEAL FOOD AND WASTE CONTAINERS

Keep all food and waste safe from mice in sealed containers. Rubbish should be returned to mainland & disposed of responsibly.



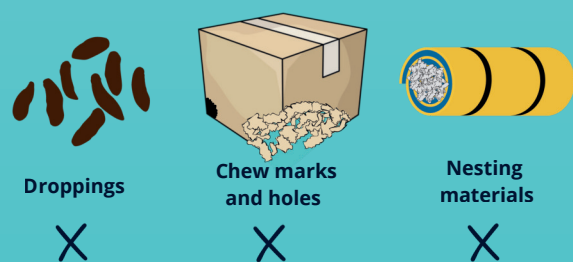
#### 3 WASH YOUR BOOTS

Reduce the risk of spreading disease and non-native plant seeds by washing and air drying boots between trips.



#### 4 BE VIGILANT

Never leave baggage unattended during the journey or at the quayside to avoid stowaways.



#### SIGNS OF STOWAWAYS



✗ **ENTRANCE HOLES**



✗ **NEST MATERIAL**



✗ **DROPPINGS**



✗ **GNAW MARKS**

**IF YOU SEE A STOWAWAY ABOARD:**

- DO NOT LAND ON A SEABIRD ISLAND
- DO NOT PUSH IT OVERBOARD

**MANY MAMMALS ARE STRONG SWIMMERS**

**IF YOU NOTICE AN INVASIVE NON-NATIVE PREDATOR ON AN ISLAND REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO A MEMBER OF STAFF OR VIA OUR WEBSITE.**

## SAIL WITHOUT STOWAWAYS

SIMPLE WAYS TO RUN A RAT FREE BOAT:



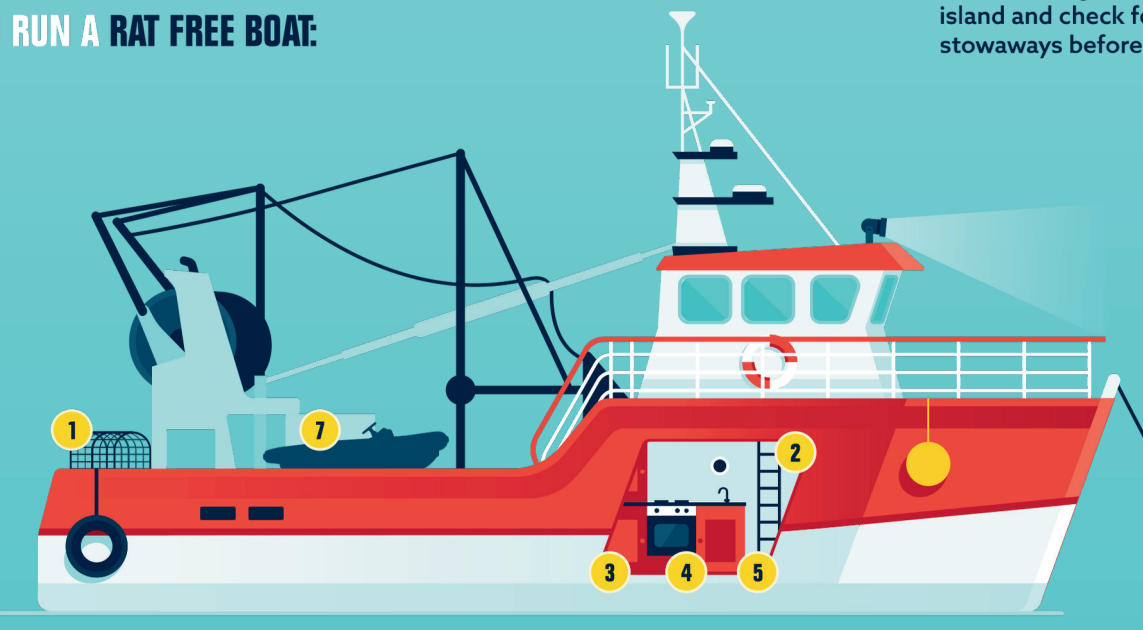
#### 1 EQUIPMENT

Inspect and shake out nets, lines and creels before taking them on board



#### 2 CHECK YOUR HULL

Deploy chew cards or wax chew blocks - check them regularly for signs of stowaways



**7 OPEN TENDER**  
Always use an open tender when landing on a seabird island and check for signs of stowaways before launching



**6 RAT GUARDS**  
Use rat guards on mooring lines and anchor chains



#### 3 LUGGAGE

Repack luggage before boarding and never leave unattended on harbour side



#### 4 CARGO

Pack cargo in rodent proof containers and check for signs of stowaways before boarding



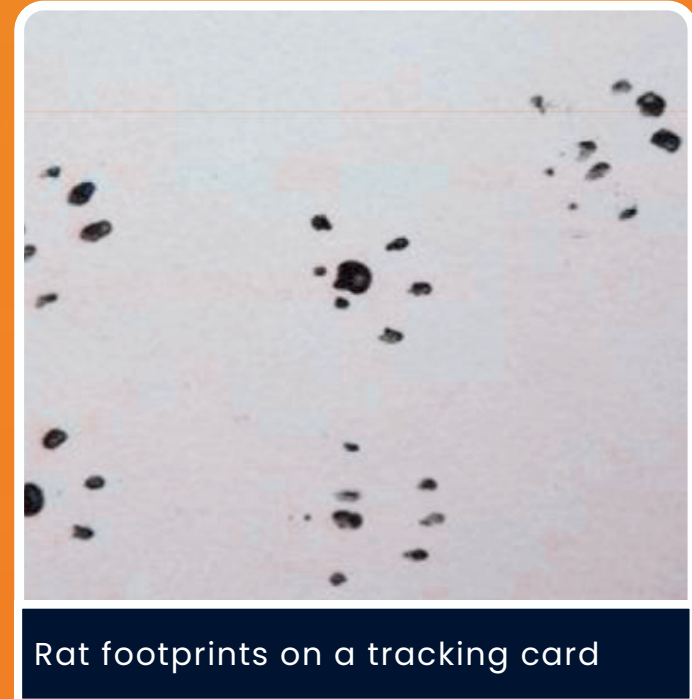
#### 5 WASTE

Store food and waste securely within rodent proof containers

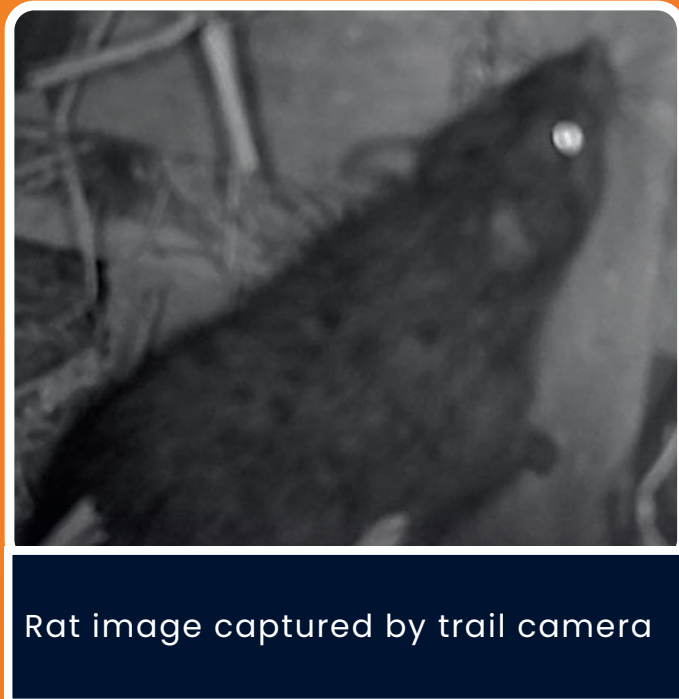
# COLLABORATION FOR GREATER IMPACT - TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE SEABIRDS

**If prevention fails, we must DETECT an incursion quickly...**

Our biosecurity toolkit includes passive surveillance, such as trail cameras, footprint tracking cards and wax chew blocks. These are non-lethal surveillance techniques which can be in constant operation on islands, boats and other strategic locations. They require regular checking to interpret the results.



Rat footprints on a tracking card



Rat image captured by trail camera



Rat chew marks on a wax chew block

Alongside passive surveillance methods, our amazing Conservation Detection Dog Jinx and his handler Greg actively search islands, boats and high-risk cargo heading over to the islands.

Jinx is trained in the same way as bomb or drug detection dogs, but on the scent of rats. If he detects rat or rat droppings, he sits to indicate to Greg that he has found something. Greg will then call Jinx back and go for a closer look himself to identify what Jinx has found. **Jinx does not chase or catch rats.**

Having an active detection tool in our toolkit allows us to cover more ground and have more confidence in our results – a real game changer!



Jinx the Conservation Detection Dog

**We must RESPOND to an incursion quickly, before an eradication is needed.**

**1 pregnant female rat can produce a colony of over 300 in just 8 months**



**Rapid Incursion Response Hubs** hold all the kit required for detecting invasive predators and responding to incursions quickly.

Invasive non-native predators, such as rats and mice can reach islands as stowaways, this is referred to as a biosecurity incursion. They can quickly decimate seabird colonies by eating eggs, chicks, and adult birds.

We have seen this happen on islands all over the world, including Ramsey Island on the Pembrokeshire coast. While a rat eradication was successful on Ramsey in 2000, and many species, in particular the Manx Shearwater are now increasing in numbers on the island, the Puffin population has still not returned by 2025.

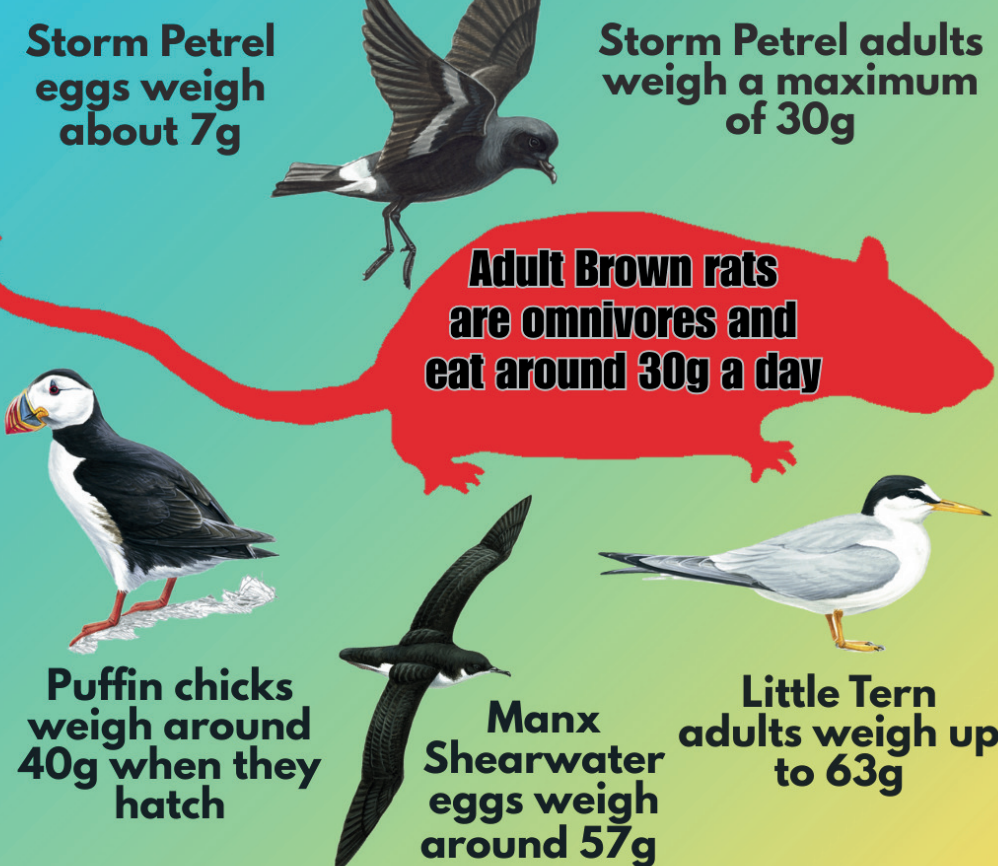
**Over 40 biosecurity incursions were reported on islands designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) for breeding seabirds around the UK between 2018 and 2025 alone.**

**We can't do this alone! It requires everyone, from tourists on day trips, commercial boat operators, island staff and communities and everyone else visiting seabird islands to be vigilant and report any sightings immediately.**

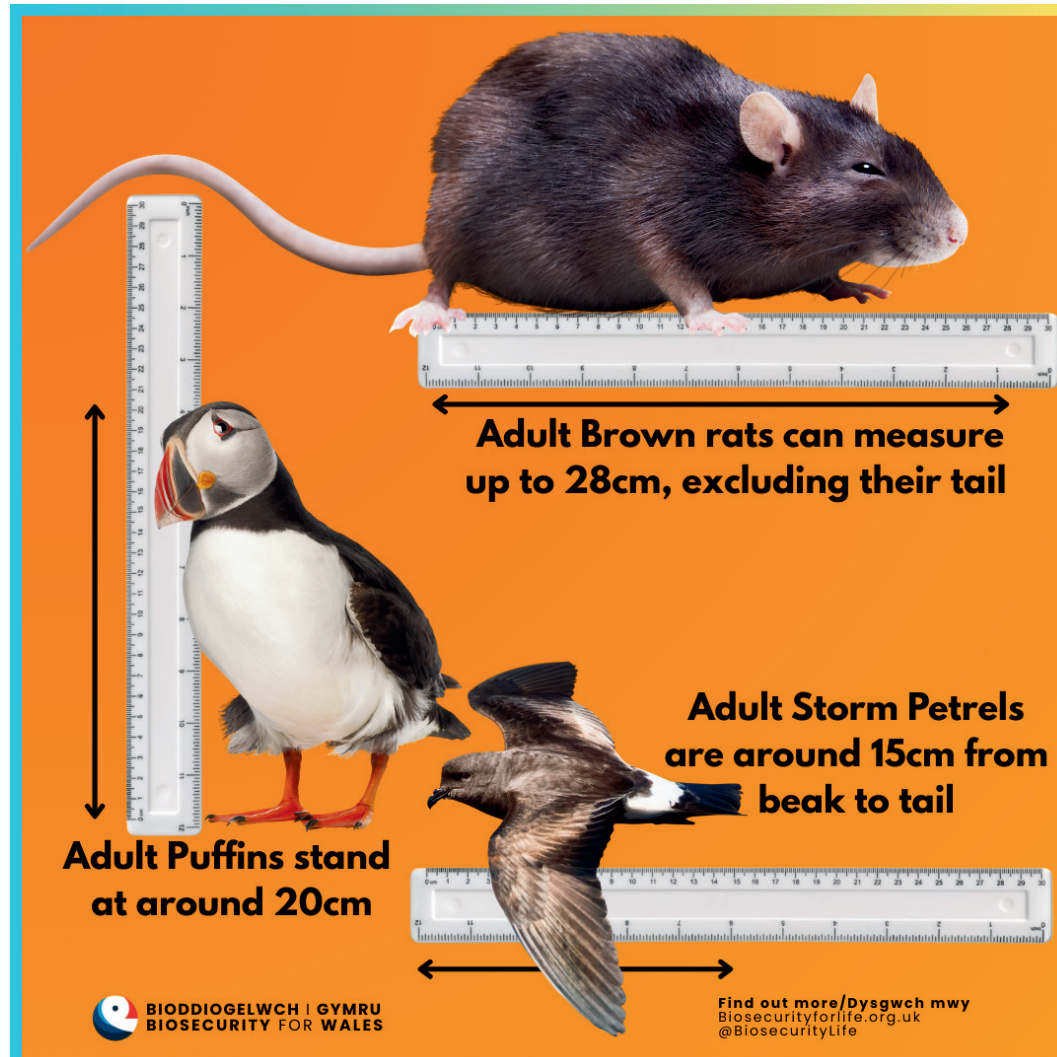


**Volunteers**  
To operate these hubs, we have large groups of trained volunteers on standby to respond immediately. These are hub volunteers during a mock incursion.

**PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE, BIOSECURITY CAN SAVE MONEY AND SPECIES.**  
There is no guarantee that an eradication will be successful despite the huge cost and expertise involved, they take years to plan and even if successful the species lost may never return.



Storm Petrel eggs weigh about 7g  
Storm Petrel adults weigh a maximum of 30g  
Puffin chicks weigh around 40g when they hatch  
Manx Shearwater eggs weigh around 57g  
Little Tern adults weigh up to 63g  
**Adult Brown rats are omnivores and eat around 30g a day**



Adult Brown rats can measure up to 28cm, excluding their tail  
Adult Puffins stand at around 20cm  
Adult Storm Petrels are around 15cm from beak to tail

Results from the latest Seabirds Count (2015 - 2021), which is the biggest survey of breeding seabirds in the UK, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Isles in 20 years, revealed that almost half of the species which commonly breed here have declined since the previous survey (Seabird 2000, 1998-2002).

But there are also success stories which show, when we act we can help populations to recover.



We have produced or advised on Biosecurity Plans for over **50** islands  
Between 2023 and 2025:  
**40** island checks have been performed by Conservation Detection Dogs  
We have responded to and advised on **24** reported incursions  
We have **10** Rapid Incursion Response Hubs filled with everything we need in case of an incursion and **170** volunteers ready to respond.  
Our social media accounts have engaged over **65k** people  
We have **51** vessels accredited into the PFC scheme as well as **14** boat operators implementing biosecurity on their boats  
We have visited **359** school children and  
Spoken to over **1900** people at events



Biosecurityforlife.org.uk  
@BiosecurityLife

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