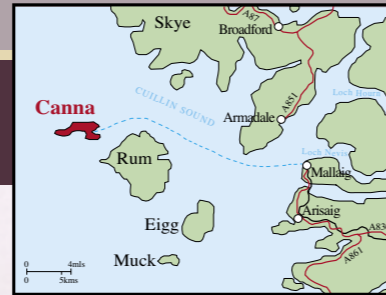


Scotland is particularly rich in seabirds, with some 45 per cent of all the seabirds in the European Union, and has 48 Special Protection Areas established primarily or partially for seabirds. We have an obligation to ensure that the birds in these sites continue to thrive.



Canna is the most westerly of the Small Isles and can be reached by ferry from Mallaig.



Canna
INNER HEBRIDES



The National Trust
for Scotland

Canna Seabird Recovery Project

The National Trust for Scotland is an independent charity with the aim of conserving, managing and promoting Scotland's cultural and natural heritage. We depend on our members and visitors to enable us to continue our work, both now and in the future.

Please support the Trust by becoming a member today and help to protect Scotland's heritage for future generations to enjoy.

For further details on the project visit:
www.nts-seabirds.org.uk

The National Trust for Scotland, Wemyss House,
28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh EH2 4ET
www.nts.org.uk

Recognised Charity No. SC007410



The National Trust
for Scotland



Canna Seabird Recovery Project

Canna is a Special Protection Area – part of the European Union NATURA 2000 network of important bird sites – on account of its internationally important concentrations of breeding seabirds. These included 1,500 pairs of Manx shearwaters, over 1,000 pairs of shags, 930 pairs of kittiwakes and large colonies of guillemots, razorbills, puffins and gulls. But many of these have now seriously diminished in number.



The Problem

Monitoring work undertaken on Canna by the Highland Ringing Group since 1969 showed major declines in seabird numbers.

The worst decline had affected the Manx shearwater colony, which dropped from 1,500 pairs to possibly only 1 or 2 pairs.

The table below shows the percentage change in seabird numbers between 1995 and 2004.

Adult Manx shearwater



Bob Swann

	% change
Fulmar	-33%
Shag	-50%
Herring gull	-62%
Guillemot	-16%
Razorbill	-62%
Kittiwake	+43%

The Canna shag colony had been one of the largest in Europe.

The declines on Canna were far greater than those occurring on neighbouring islands. They were also mainly affecting species nesting in burrows or under boulders. Birds nesting on inaccessible cliff ledges, like kittiwakes, were actually increasing in number.

Research showed that the declines were primarily due to high levels of predation on eggs and small chicks by brown rats. The island's rat population was rapidly increasing, probably as a result of milder winters.

Kittiwakes on nest with young



Bob Swann

Brown rat



Adult shag

Bob Swann



This map shows the location of all bait stations on Canna

Kevin Floyd, WMIL

The Solution

Using this data the National Trust for Scotland conducted a feasibility study for the eradication of rats on Canna, which led to the Canna Seabird Recovery Project. Funding for this project was provided from the European Union Life Fund, with contributions from Scottish Natural Heritage, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and The National Trust for Scotland, owners of Canna.

Wildlife Management International Ltd were contracted to undertake the task. The first stage involved putting out the bait station grid.

In all, 4,220 bait stations were placed out, covering the entire island, with one every 50 metres, except on the high plateau where they were every 100 metres.

The stations were designed to exclude all mammals larger than a rat. Smaller animals could, however, access the bait. This could affect Canna's unique species of woodmouse, so the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland assisted. They caught and removed a breeding colony of 158 mice, whose progeny will be re-introduced when the project is completed.

In early November 2005, stage two, the poisoning stage, commenced. The project used Ditrac Blox, a wax block containing diphacinone, a first generation rodenticide.



One of the 4220 bait stations

Bob Swann



Canna Mouse

Abbie Patterson

This was chosen to avoid secondary poisoning, which might have affected bird of prey populations.

Bait take was carefully recorded so that 'hot spots' of remaining rat activity could be identified. A monitoring grid of rat 'goodies' like soap, candles and chocolate, also helps to identify the presence of remaining rats where intensive poisoning can be targeted, if necessary, using second generation poisons. Most of the rats are expected to have been eradicated by March 2006, with any remaining pockets being removed the following winter.

Afterlife

It is essential that monitoring continues for the next two years to confirm that all rats have indeed been eradicated. It is also vital to set up procedures to ensure that accidental re-introduction does not take place. This will involve the establishment of a ring of permanent trap boxes round the pier. Caledonian MacBrayne ferries will also carry baited rat boxes, as will other shipping that regularly visits the island.

The Highland Ringing group team will continue to monitor Canna's seabird colonies. The eradication of the rats should lead to an increase in breeding productivity, eventually resulting in increasing numbers of nesting birds.

The National Trust for Scotland in partnership with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland will continue to monitor the small mammal population after the reintroduction of the Canna mice and will work to keep Canna rat-free for the future.

How can you help?

Islanders and visitors are asked to be vigilant and report any signs of rat activity. Particular care must be taken to dispose of all rubbish only in the containers provided.

Bait stations and monitoring stations are located in each property and on a grid over the entire island. Please do not interfere with these as they are being used to ascertain whether any rats remain on the island.