

Scotland

Sam Rainscombe 2020



Scotland's marine landscape now has more protection.

RSPB Scotland has risen to the challenges of Covid-19. We've reviewed and extended work at the Orkney Native Wildlife Project, continued transformational change at landscape level through Cairngorms Connect, and there is now a Scottish Government commitment to license grouse shooting. Our staff, volunteers and supporters are at the heart of this – thank you.

Anne McCall
Director, RSPB Scotland

Ian Francis (rspb-images.com)



Short-eared owls are one of the birds we're helping through the Orkney Native Wildlife Project.

Protecting Orkney's native wildlife

In Orkney, stoats are an invasive non-native species. They could pose a very serious threat to the islands' native wildlife, particularly ground-nesting birds like curlews, Arctic terns, hen harriers and short-eared owls, along with the Orkney vole, which is found only in Orkney. Many of these species are important for Orkney's economy through wildlife tourism and for the health and wellbeing of local communities.

The Orkney Native Wildlife Project aims to safeguard the future of Orkney's incredible native wildlife by removing every last stoat from Orkney and putting measures in place to ensure they cannot return. The team also have biosecurity measures (including traps and cameras) in place on inner islands to stop stoats spreading there and returning in future. The team monitor native species with the help of volunteers and citizen scientists, engaging with young people through schools, and working with others to celebrate Orkney's incredible natural heritage.

Despite significant impacts caused by Covid-19 – including a halt of trapping activity and wildlife monitoring during the first lockdown, cancellation of school visits and events, and delays to the arrival of the specially-trained stoat detection dogs – the project has made good progress.

With permission from more than 770 landowners, the trap network is now in place and more than 1,361 stoats have been caught. In addition, Europe's first stoat detection dogs have arrived. Full wildlife monitoring can take place in 2021, and we look forward to the return of events and school visits once safe. Before lockdown over 1,800 primary school pupils had attended special workshops and there are ambitious plans for secondary schools too.

The project is hugely grateful for the ongoing support of communities in Orkney and further afield.

The Orkney Native Wildlife Project is a partnership between RSPB Scotland, NatureScot and Orkney Islands Council with generous funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund and EU LIFE along with NatureScot and the RSPB.

To find out more, visit:

www.orkneynativewildlife.org.uk

Three stoat detection dogs arrived in Orkney in April 2021.



Boosting Scotland's marine wildlife

In December 2020, marine wildlife in Scotland got a boost when 12 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for marine birds were announced by the Scottish Government. The SPAs are the first in Scotland to protect important feeding and wintering areas for marine birds at sea.

The SPAs will collectively provide protection for 31 species including seabirds, divers, seaducks and grebes. The Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPA protects over 20 different species, and in

the breeding season over 100,000 seabirds come here to feed. These site classifications are the result of years of research, advocacy, and campaigning. A huge thank you to everyone who helped us champion the sites.

Although these SPAs are a welcome step, more needs to be done. As we continue into the Year of Coasts and Waters, we hope to receive more good news for Scotland's marine birds, starting with the classification of the outstanding Orkney sites and delivery of a Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy.