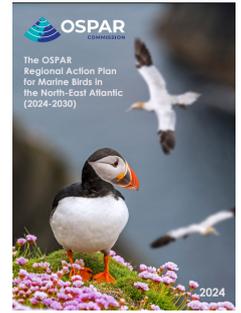




Marine birds in the North-East Atlantic are in trouble. The OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Marine Birds (RAP-Bird) identifies the most important protection and conservation actions to be implemented on a regional scale for the recovery of marine birds within the North-East Atlantic. This fact sheet highlights OSPAR-wide coordinated measures to protect breeding colonies from (invasive) native and non-native predatory mammals and efforts to restore or create, where practicable, safe nesting habitat. This briefing note also introduces us to the experts leading this important work.

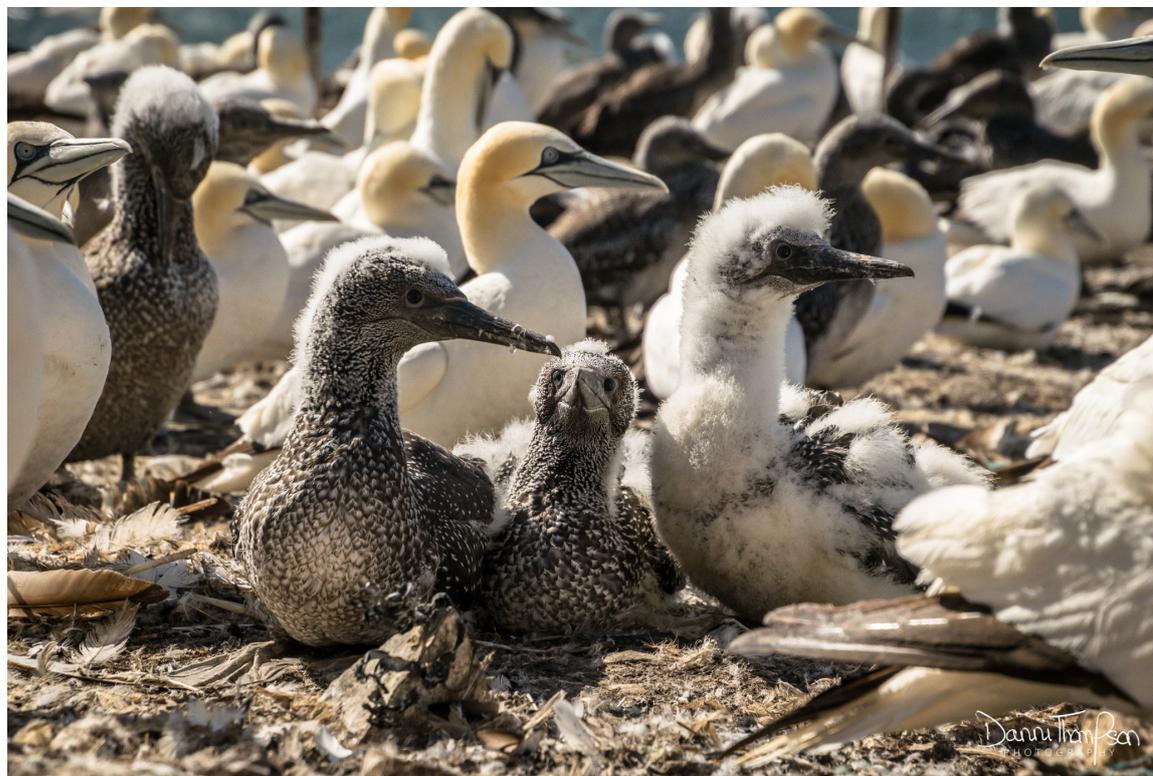


What is the issue?

Pressure from (invasive) predatory mammals has caused the loss of safe breeding habitat. The largest seabird breeding colonies in the North-East Atlantic occur on islands that are currently free of mammalian predators. These island colonies are potentially at risk from future incursions, possibly facilitated by human activities such as tourism. This risk can be minimised by effective biosecurity measures.

On the mainland and on inshore islands, the eggs and chicks of ground nesting marine birds are at risk from predation by native and non-native mammals. This risk can be reduced by removing non-native predators and by excluding native predators (e.g. by surrounding colonies with electric fences). These measures can create breeding habitat for marine birds in new locations and can restore safe breeding habitat at locations where marine birds were previously extirpated by predatory mammals. Such measures would help to offset other pressures by creating more resilient marine bird populations.

Northern gannets only breed on remote islands or headlands where invasive mammal predators, such as rats, cannot access.



How will the successful completion of this action benefit marine birds?

This action will conduct an analysis throughout the coast adjacent to the North-East Atlantic of existing national measures to reduce predation by mammals on nesting marine birds. It will identify areas where biosecurity measures are sufficiently in place to protect breeding areas from mammal predation and other areas (e.g. islands) where mammal predators could be feasibly eradicated to restore safe nesting habitat. By doing so it will develop advice on best practice and will identify which breeding areas would benefit from new or improved biosecurity measures. The outputs from the action will be used to develop an OSPAR Recommendation to reduce the impact of predatory mammals on marine birds.

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The brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is the most widespread non-native predatory mammal in Europe, and greatly affects where ground-nesting seabirds can successfully breed.

Red Fox eats Arctic Skua egg: In some northern regions Red Foxes have spread into areas formerly occupied by the smaller Arctic Fox. Some seabird species may experience increased predation because they are less successful in deterring the larger invader from their breeding colonies.

Meet our experts

Ian Mitchell, International Advice Team Leader, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), United Kingdom.

Hans Schekkerman, Senior Researcher, Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology, the Netherlands



Henri Zomer, Advisor Marine bird/bat ecology, Rijkswaterstaat (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management), the Netherlands



Suzanne Vink, Policy Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature the Netherlands

