

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Seventh Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group</p> <p><i>Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 18 - 19 May 2023</i></p> <p>Update on the Gough Island Restoration Programme</p> <p><i>Sophie Thomas, Andrew Callender, Antje Steinfurth</i></p>
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SUMMARY

In 2021, the RSPB – on behalf of Tristan da Cunha and in collaboration with partners – attempted to eradicate invasive non-native House Mouse *Mus musculus* from Gough Island. The mice, likely introduced to the island by sealers in the nineteenth century, were known to be predating unsustainable numbers of seabird eggs and chicks thereby negatively impacting the majority of Gough's 22 breeding seabird species. The eradication operation involved the distribution of just over 200 tonnes of Pestoff® Rodent Bait 20R cereal bait (active ingredient Brodifacoum at 20 ppm) across the entirety of Gough Island during (austral) winter, when alternative food sources were most scarce. A captive holding operation ran concurrently to safeguard a population of each of the two island's land bird species, which had been assessed as at potentially significant risk from the rodent bait. Unfortunately, 19 weeks after the last of the rodent bait had been distributed, a mouse was detected on a camera trap. An Independent Review was commissioned to identify and assess possible causes of eradication failure and make recommendations for a future eradication attempt.

During the first breeding season following the eradication attempt, no evidence of mouse predation on seabirds was detected, likely due to House Mouse numbers being relatively low. Breeding success was high amongst monitored species, including Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* (75.5%), Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* (74.5%), Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* (77.9%) and Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea* (78.6%) though it was below average for Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* (37.8%). The initial eradication attempt has provided respite for at least one breeding season for Gough's internationally important and threatened seabird species – which may prove invaluable.