

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Fourth Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group <i>Wellington, New Zealand, 7 – 8 September 2017</i></p> <p>Rodent eradication scaled up: clearing rats and mice from South Georgia <i>Martin, A.R. and Richardson, M.G.</i></p>
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SUMMARY

The subantarctic island of South Georgia lost most of its birds to predation by rodents introduced by humans over two centuries. In 2011, a small UK charity began to clear brown rats *Rattus norvegicus* and house mice *Mus musculus* from the 170 km long, 3,500 km² island using helicopters to spread bait with Brodifacoum as the active ingredient. South Georgia's larger glaciers were barriers to rodent movement, creating numerous independent 'sub-island' populations. The eradication could therefore be spread over multiple seasons, allowing time to evaluate results before re-commencing, and also reducing the impact of non-target mortality across the island as a whole. Eradication success was achieved in the 128 km² Phase 1 trial operation. Work in 2013 (Phase 2) and early 2015 (Phase 3) covered the remaining 940 km² occupied by rodents. By January 2017, 22 months after baiting was concluded, no sign of surviving rodents had been seen, other than one apparently newly introduced by ship in October 2014. A survey using detection dogs and passive devices will search the Phase 2 and Phase 3 land for rodents in early 2018. Seven (of 30) species of breeding birds suffered losses from poisoning, but all populations appear to have recovered within five years. The endemic South Georgia pipit *Anthus antarcticus* was the first bird to breed in newly rat-free areas, but there were also signs that cavity-nesting seabirds were exploring scree habitat denied them for generations. Enhanced biosecurity measures on South Georgia are urgently needed to prevent rodents being re-introduced.