



# United States Department of the Interior

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## **Rat Found Dead on St. Paul Island**

After months of monitoring and setting traps for a Norway rat that was spotted last fall on St. Paul Island, a rat has been found dead. The rat likely died of poison deployed recently by a certified rodenticide applicator.

St. Paul Island, one of two inhabited islands of the Pribilof Islands is home to Unangan people and a diversity of wildlife. The Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Ecosystem Conservation Office have a proud history of keeping the island rat-free since the 1990's. Rats are dangerous threats to wildlife; they eat birds, chicks, and eggs. The Pribilof Islands, including St. Paul, are breeding habitat for millions of seabirds and an iconic destination for birdwatchers who want to see rare species from the Bering Sea and to spot Asiatic species passing through the islands.

When a rat was sighted last fall, ECO mounted an immediate response, but after a week of unsuccessful attempts to capture the rat, the Refuge put together a strike team consisting of staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Wildlife Services, ECO, and Island Conservation to respond to the threat. Sophisticated monitoring equipment including various rat trap types, baits, and wildlife cameras were deployed, but the wily rat continued to evade capture.

Finally, on June 30, Refuge biologists were just returning for the day from field work, including weighing the first tiny kittiwake chicks of the year, when they received word that the dead rat had been found by a visiting birdwatcher.

The Refuge and Tribe are thankful for the ongoing partnership of the USDA and Island Conservation to curb this threat to the beautiful Pribilof Islands. Refuge Supervisory Biologist Heather Renner said *"There is still continued monitoring to be done to confirm whether this was the ONLY rat on St. Paul, but this is really wonderful news after a frustrating 10 months."*

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