



A week in the life LIFE Raft Fieldwork Assistants

About LIFE Raft

LIFE Raft is a ground-breaking project on Rathlin Island which aims to protect NI's most important seabird colony.

Rathlin, a short ferry ride off the north Antrim coast, welcome thousands of breeding seabirds each spring including Puffins, Razorbills, and the biggest population of Guillemots found anywhere across the UK and Ireland.

These birds are threatened, however, by invasive non-native rats and ferrets. They eat eggs and chicks and even attack adults, decimating seabird numbers and driving them further and further down the cliffs. LIFE Raft's goal is to eradicate rats and ferrets from the island – restoring it as a safe breeding space for the birds and protecting the island community's natural and cultural heritage.

Meet the team

The project is made up of people from many different backgrounds with a wide range of skills.

The 11 Fieldwork Assistant roles will sit with the wider fieldworker group. Since October the group have been focused on the ferret traps – creating, placing, and checking nearly 600 traps across the entire island. Over the next few months they'll be transferring to focusing on the rat eradication phase of the project. There is more on these roles 'A day in the life', below.

There are climbers who have installed an incredible 5.5km of traverse lines around the island. These will be critical in allowing fieldworkers to access even difficult to reach parts of the island.

There is the community team who have been engaging with residents on island for years – discussing their views and concerns, ensuring they are happy with access to property, and working with businesses to ensure that the community benefits from LIFE Raft being on island.

There are the logistics and finance experts who work behind the scenes to make sure that all the equipment and people get to where they need to be.

Finally, there are eradication experts who have designed and advised on the multi-year strategy. This is the first ferret eradication in the world, requiring particular nuance and flexibility.

Life on Rathlin

We ask that successful candidates stay on Rathlin for long periods of time as early starts and late finishes don't tie in with the ferry timetable.

Rathlin is a beautiful island with a close-knit community of about 160 people. There is a hotel, a cooperatively run store, shops with local products, a pub and café, and regular yoga and film nights.

There is also lots for the wildlife enthusiast. While the seabirds are a strong draw in the spring and the summer there are curlews, oystercatchers, eider ducks and seals all year round, while dolphins are regularly seen from the ferries and harbours.

Rathlin’s dark skies also allow for stunning views of the stars. And with 2024 set to be a particularly good year for the northern lights, it’s a great time to be spending time on island.

A typical day

Most days will follow the same basic structure (it’s rare for a day to be cancelled due to weather):

8-8:30 – toolbox talk - the day starts with a run-down for the day by the team leader, normally either at the LIFE Raft office or the shed which is the centre of operations work on island.

8.30 – 9.00 – travel to that day’s designated routes.

9.00 – 13.00 – working that day’s routes. This will involve checking and rebaiting bait stations over varied and sometimes rough terrain, and can be tough physical work (with tea breaks in the field/truck)

13-13:30 – lunch break in the field/truck

13:30-16:00 – completing that day’s routes.

A week in the life

While most days will involve fieldwork, this covers varied terrains and there are also elements of data management. Field Assistants will also be working six days at a time on a staggered basis:

	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1	Checking bait stations around the main residential area	Checking bait stations around the Rue Lighthouse
Day 2	Checking bait stations on the north side of the island, along the coast	Checking bait stations on the north side of the island, along the coast
Day 3	Data management (desk)	
Day 4	Checking bait stations – involving going on the traverse lines on the cliffs	Checking bait stations – involving going on the traverse lines on the cliffs
Day 5	Dropping off additional bait stations in hard-to-access locations	Dropping off additional bait stations in hard-to-access locations
Day 6	Working with local residents to check their indoor bait stations	Making wax blocks to help track rat movement

This is rewarding but tough work, and the ideal candidate will :

- Have a “can do” attitude towards fieldwork and teamwork
- Work diligently and have an attention to detail to complete data collection to specified standards
- Be able to take direction but also open and honest when challenges arise.
- Takes their safety and that of their colleagues seriously.
- A passionate advocate for Rathlin Island and the recovery and conservation of breeding seabirds in this fragile island ecosystem.
- Have significant track record in troubleshooting problems in the field and putting in place solutions in line with RSPB systems and procedures;
- Understand your role in Health and Safety systems.

- Able to communicate to members of the Rathlin community with respect for their view and confidence about LIFE Raft mission to ensure the successful eradication of invasive non-native species.
- A good working knowledge of how to achieve the eradication of invasive non-native species from islands.
- Always have a collaborative and inclusive work ethic
- Communication skills and interpersonal skills needed to ensure good team spirit during high pressured work periods.