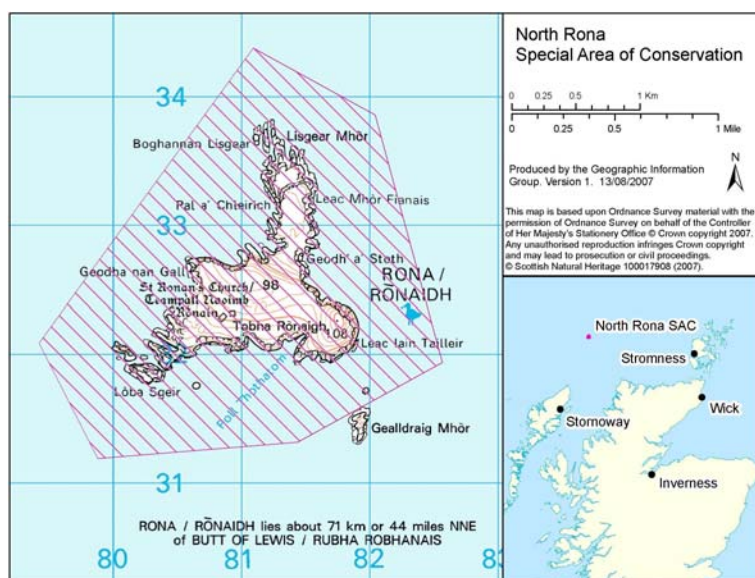


North Rona Marine Biological Survey

Dylan Todd, Scottish Natural Heritage

A team of marine scientists and surveyors from Scottish Natural Heritage and SeaStar Survey are currently undertaking a survey of marine habitats and species within North Rona Special Area of Conservation, the most north-westerly island associated with Britain's Atlantic coast.



Despite the weather on North Rona generally being described as being 'continuously dull and wet throughout the greater part of the year' the team successfully completed the acoustic data collection from SeaStar Survey's new vessel 'Otarie' on Thursday 2nd June with only a few days cancelled due to stormy conditions.

The survey will focus on North Rona's qualifying coastal and marine interests include reefs, sea caves and coastline with vegetated sea cliffs that reach 75 metres. North Rona is also home to a population of 5,600 grey seals making it the third largest breeding colony in the British Isles. The relatively undisturbed shores and adjacent areas of sea are ideal for adult social interactions and mating, as well as providing a nursery area for pups.



In mid July the second phase of the survey will kick-off with around 10 days of underwater video and photography to be shot to characterise the seafloor map generated by the acoustic data. The underwater footage will also bring to life the wildlife that inhabits this remote and exposed part of the UK.

