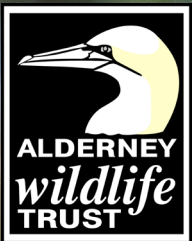


ALDERNEY

WILDLIFE



SPRING 2020 | THE BIG PICTURE

Protecting Alderney's wildlife for the future



Editorial

Nature is more important than ever for all of us during the present crisis. Whether the only dose of the outdoors you're getting is from your window, or if you can still get outside for a daily walk, nature is one of the few constants left for us. If you can, make sure you get out for a walk, run or cycle as often as possible. Recent research showed just two hours of nature-time every week could boost health and wellbeing – and that doesn't necessarily even mean a walk. Sitting with an open window or on the doorstep can still have a positive effect.

There are lots of extra ways springing up to connect with everyday wildlife springing up too. Blogs, podcasts, videos – you name it and there's a conservation organisation producing it. Some of our favourites are the Wildlife Trusts 'Wildlife Wednesday' videos on the Watch YouTube channel, with a informative video and an activity video. Lizzie Daly's "Earth LIVE" introduces you to conservationists and their projects around the globe; and of course I'm going to plug the AWT's contribution! We have regular blogs about the puffins at www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk, Lindsay is doing twice-weekly posts on our website about spring flora and we are also getting involved with Wildlife Wednesday videos on our social media channels.

After all this is over nature will still be there and likely to need our help more than ever before. Generally, after times of economic hardship, regulations to protect the environment are rolled back to make way for businesses to recover. The AWT will be here too, protecting Alderney's wildlife for the future as we have always done, pushing for better and stronger environmental regulation and making sure our sites offer the best habitats possible for wildlife.

So, thank you very much for your support through your membership as always. Any other donations you might feel able to give will go towards our conservation work on Alderney, ensuring a bright future for wildlife, and for us all.

Claire



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Front cover: Britain's most common bird, the wren - Joshua Copping

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Finding the positives

Writing this issue's Manager's Report is somewhat challenging. Everyone has heard more than enough about the Covid crisis but we must try and look beyond the immediate impacts to the challenges ahead.

After the exceptional team we had in 2019, with Connor, Dani, Lilli and Hannah doing such incredible work, we are extremely lucky this year to be joined by Jack (Ramsar) and Thomas (Conservation) who have already proven their worth and commitment despite everything that has been thrown at them.

Results from last year's work include one of the most detailed assessments of the Alderney Ramsar site to date, a study of Alderney's resident bat population - growing our knowledge of what is present and when - and a survey of the wild flowers and grasses of the Longis Nature Reserve which shows an increase in diversity in most plots. Bad news came from a study of Dragonflies at the two Longis Nature Reserve ponds which showed a dramatic reduction of dragonflies at Mannez, and also to a lesser extent at Longis. This seems to have been brought about by the ever-increasing amount of invasive pond weeds (such as *crassula helmsii* and parrot's feather) and restrictions on conservation management work.

These studies are published on our website and one of our primary focuses for this year will be making sure the AWT's records and data are accessible to anyone who might be interested. We will wait and see whether we are still able to improve the Alderney Records Centre as planned this year. Despite current restrictions we will continue to work to keep the seasonal recording going where we can. Much of the reserves and footpaths programme, as well as anything involving the boat, is on pause but the team is working hard so that once the tightest lockdown rules are loosened we can be back out on the water and around the island at work immediately. The full team, including our staff and regular volunteers, are by no means sitting dormant and we are thinking of ways to ensure that 2020 can still be one of our most dynamic wildlife years on record.

Roland Gauvain





News round-up

Arbor Day

On the 7th of March, we celebrated Arbor Day - a day which aims to celebrate trees and is usually marked by tree-planting and community events. Where better to spend Arbor Day than the Community Woodland?



In the past, the AWT has organised tree planting in the ACW. Over 11,000 saplings have been planted here over the years. In an effort to give these saplings a chance to establish themselves without overcrowding, the AWT invited the public to visit the Orchard this year. Following guidance from Lee Sanders, an Alderney horticulturalist, the Conservation Volunteers pruned and weeded fruit trees, ensuring increased productivity in future. It is our hope that, in time, the Orchard will become a beloved resource of the ACW, and this is a step towards delivering on that. Future Arbor Days may involve further fruit tree plantings, as there is space for the Orchard to expand. Following this maintenance, we expect to see much more fruit from late summer. We invite the public to visit the nascent orchard when they are

next walking in the ACW, and get in touch with the AWT to let us know what they hope to see from the woodland and future Arbor Day events.

Adopt an animal with us

We have been busy updating our wildlife adoption packs over the winter. The gannet adoption pack has been given a revamp and we also have brand new adopt-a-puffin and adopt-a-hedgehog packs.

Adopting an animal from the AWT helps support our conservation work, contributing to costs such as monitoring equipment, survey time and the webcams. In each pack you will get a fun facts card, cuddly toy, pin badge and an adoption card to keep. Visit the AWT website and follow the link on the home page to adopt your own Alderney wildlife!

The puffin cameras started working again in March, with puffins appearing on land from the 2nd April. Watch out for puffins clearing out burrows and bringing back nesting material throughout April before they lay their eggs later in the month.



Wonderful Wetlands Competition

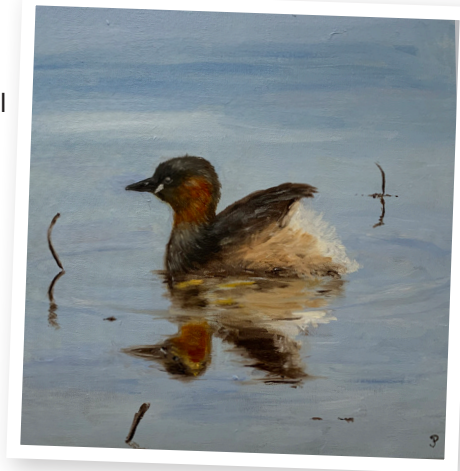
We would like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone who entered our Wonderful Wetlands competition in February and also to the Alderney Art Club for letting us use their studio to display the amazing creative pieces.

All we asked was that entries represented an aspect of Alderney's wetlands in any creative way, whether that was a wetland species or habitat - painting, drawing, poem or sculpture - was up to them.

We were so delighted with the entries we received and once all displayed together they really showed what diverse places wetlands can be. The competition was to mark World Wetlands Day, which links in with Ramsar sites (or wetlands of international importance, such as the Alderney west coast and Burhou islands Ramsar site which the AWT manages on behalf of the States of Alderney) across the globe.

The winners were Pauline Powell for her painting of a little grebe on Longis pond and Keira Scott for her poem about nature and how we need to protect it. Both received a wetlands goody bag as a prize.

We hope to run a similar competition next year with even more entries so keep an eye out for that and get your thinking caps on!



**Nature is beautiful,
Nature is scared,
Nature is lovely,
Nature is dying!**

**We are killing nature,
It's our fault,
It's dying because of us,
We need to help
So get up, wake up!
Help our world!**

**Nature is beautiful,
Nature is scared,
Nature is lovely,
Nature needs you!**



Poem by Keira Scott

Protecting Alderney's Wildlife

Roland Gauvain

When the Alderney Wildlife Trust was first conceived, almost 20 years ago, perhaps the most fundamental challenge facing the island was the lack of protection for its natural environment. In 2002 there was only one wildlife law, the 1949, 'Protection of Wild Birds (Alderney), Ordinance'. Furthermore, Alderney had abstained from signing most international conventions and it was through these, such as the Convention on Biodiversity, that governments around the world were driving wildlife protection. Whilst Alderney didn't face mass development looming ready to destroy its green and fertile land, there was a growing awareness that Alderney's environment was being neglected and it was perhaps this realisation that inspired more than 10% of the island's population to establish the AWT.

After 18 years of false starts, broken promises and campaigning, the States of Alderney (SoA) signed the Blue Islands Environment Charter (Blue Islands) in September 2019, alongside 8 other island governments. That signature saw a commitment to legislate to protect the environment, creating not only wildlife law but also taking direct action on waste. The first act of this was SoA's approval 9-1 to ban plastic carrier bags in March. Thanks to Blue Islands Alderney has shifted from being the tail gunner in the battle to potentially taking a lead, which, given how dependant the island is on its natural world, be it for tourism, food production or drinking water, makes more than a little sense.



Dragonflies are declining in species richness and abundance at Mannez due to increased presence of invasive species.



Looking out to Coque Lihou from the Vau du Saou nature reserve. The rocks are home to amber listed razorbill and guillemot.

So, what type of law do we need? Many urge for short, simple and quick. Commit to protections and worry about the details later, just get it done! After 18 years it's not hard to sympathise with this approach. It's easy to see that now the ball has been set rolling by government, and at a time where a global pandemic has us all isolated and anxious, the KISS ('keep it simple, stupid') philosophy chimes with many. Yet the fact is that we are facing a 'global crisis', our environment is in disarray - Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Global Pandemics all come from one root problem: humanity's global impact on a finite system - the planet earth. In a matter of days, we have uprooted our lives to protect our population from Covid-19, so we now know that if there is a real threat we can act. The climate crisis is no longer an existential threat, species loss is immediate and leads to real,

ecosystem-altering impacts. When Covid-19 has lost its novel status and people have adapted, these other threats will still be there and ever growing. Therefore, Alderney needs not only to ensure it legislates to protect, but also that its future wildlife law enables Alderney to play a part in the response to a global crisis.

Over the next few months, with no tourism, schools closed and social distancing in place, the AWT will be focusing on its conservation effort. Though our staff and volunteers will work in isolation and in compliance with all government regulations, surveys will continue, paths will be cut, invasive species destroyed and wildlife protected. Yet whilst this can help provide the basis for protecting our island's environment, without the 'good' encompassing legislation we will be little further on than we were 20 years ago.

Insect Report

David Wedd

The weather during the autumn and winter of 2019-20 has been very unpredictable and often dreadful. We might have expected the wildlife, insects especially, of our small island to have diminished accordingly – but not so! Flowers have been out as early as ever, and the periwinkles in the Valley have been just one species that seems to be in greater numbers than ever. The spring birds have been singing their heads off and are clearly finding plenty of insects to feed to their forthcoming nestlings.

Last year we recorded Emperor Dragonflies in February. We haven't equalled that in 2020 but many insects have been very abundant. In late November and in December our moth light-traps have seen more than 50 Black Rustics and Feathered Ranunculus on a single night, and a huge Convolvulus Hawk-moth on 2nd December was startling, and the extreme rarity two days later of a Rosy Underwing was even more of a surprise.

The Vanessa butterflies have appeared whenever there has been a spell of sunny weather, with Red Admirals especially



numerous. Our most famous Vanessa, the Large Tortoiseshell, enjoyed a good autumn and many are now hibernating around the island. The largest specimen we have ever seen appeared on a shop window in Victoria Street on 3rd January and is now, two months later, overwintering in a shed in the Valley. This magnificent butterfly is increasing in numbers in Alderney and its lifestyle is different from when it became extinct in UK in the 1960s. Then, the caterpillars fed on elm leaves at the top of tall trees, and when the elms disappeared, so did the Large Tortoiseshells.

In our island, and in Sark, the larvae have taken to feeding on small sucker elms growing on banks and in hedges, and the species seems to be thriving.

Whatever the weather, Alderney's insects do seem to be doing well. In addition to increasing numbers, they are often producing extra broods. In February and March of this year, for example, the beautiful Waved Umber moth has been appearing regularly, whereas in the past the first specimens would not be seen until May. Some of the migrant species, like the Pearly Underwing, can now be found right through the autumn and winter. Quite where all this is heading, we shall have to wait and see!



OAK BEAUTY MOTH

GUY EDWARDES/2020VISION

Large Tortoiseshell Butterfly



THE GARDEN MOTH SCHEME

2020's Garden Moth Scheme re-started on March 1st, with several hundred moth traps put out weekly all over the British Isles, so that numbers and species can be compared. Theo and Poppy Gauvain are the youngest taking part anywhere, and our photo shows Theo with specimens of the Oak Beauty. This large and attractive moth is increasing in numbers in Alderney, and the week-end of 14th to 16th March saw specimens in all three traps we put out: in the Valley, in the Gauvains' garden, and in the trap at the Nunnery.

It's easy to start learning about your garden moths. Why not start with a white sheet and a torch and see what you attract.



Surveys on the Rocky Shore

Jack Bush - Ramsar Officer

The AWT's continual marine survey effort paints a unique picture of the patterns of life on our rocky shores. Communities of seaweeds compete for space on the rocks, whilst invertebrates and other fauna compete for the shelter that the seaweed provides. Carefully turning over rocks - and brushing seaweed aside - reveals the home of a surprising variety of organisms: each unique crevice harbouring a different combination of species, all perfectly adapted to their rockpool home.

Survey work has been extremely useful for understanding how our rocky shores work; not least how they change in response to the pressures of human activity, ocean processes, weather events and climate change. Our data is increasingly valuable as a baseline for judging the effect of these pressures and drawing comparisons between the ecology of past and present.

For example, has an 'alien' crab species - moving north as ocean temperatures increase - had an impact on Alderney's rocky shore communities? The AWT has recently recorded the furrowed crab (*Xantho hydrophilus*) on our shores, which seems to be moving north and east with warming seas.

Understanding which organisms were present before the crab's arrival is essential to understanding how a

community has reacted to the crab. Arrivals like this can cause large-scale changes to

ecological equilibria at the landscape scale. It can't be emphasised enough how important the long-term study of our rocky shores is to our understanding of change. Baseline data is also critical to drawing comparisons with current survey work, and importantly, informing our conservation efforts.

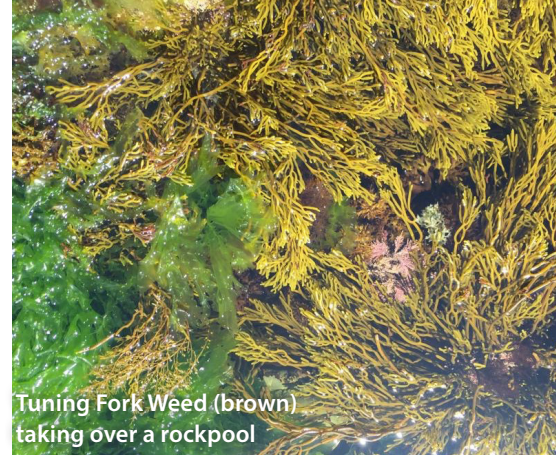
Why is surveying the movement of species due to climate change important?

The occurrence and distribution of many species is ultimately defined by seawater temperature, and many species reach either their northern or southernmost geographical limits around the Channel Islands. Identifying species which may alter their distribution in response to climatic changes is imperative in the assessment of the communities vulnerable to change.

The most recent predictions suggest that by 2100, seawater temperatures may be more than 2°C higher than in 2000. This, and other processes linked to climate change could easily drive large-scale changes in our seaweed communities. One that has already been noted on Alderney's rocky shores is the seaweed brown tuning fork weed (*Bifurcaria bifurcata*). This seaweed now dominates many areas of Alderney's rocky shore, despite being almost absent five years ago.

Why survey the movement of non-native species?

Non-native species are those introduced by humans to areas outside their natural range. They can often establish self-maintaining populations and



Tuning Fork Weed (brown) taking over a rockpool

outcompete native organisms for space on the rocky shore, and their impact can be substantial - non-natives are one of the top threats to global biodiversity.

Japanese wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*) is now common in northern Europe, including on Alderney's shores. It competes for space where native seaweeds once grew, cutting down light penetration to the underwater biosphere.

Despite efforts to curb introductions, the metaphorical 'door' is wide open; it is likely that soon, if it hasn't already happened, a non-native species will be introduced causing severe impacts to our native fauna. Our continued large scale survey work will help track local changes and is essential to informing the "big picture". The data we collect are used to inform predictions for future changes both at home and further afield.

The AWT recognises the importance of the "big-picture" but we are grounded by our patchy knowledge of Alderney's incredibly complex marine life. Our rocky shores are changing in both the abundance and type of species we find, but we must remain confident that our continued survey efforts are the best tool we have against environmental change.



GREEN ORMER POPULATION SURVEYS

Overturning rocks whilst surveying at Clonque and Longis Bay, AWT staff and volunteers are occasionally treated to a unique surprise; the green ormer (*Haliotis tuberculata*). Green ormers are regionally important to the Channel Islands, yet our understanding of their movements is incomplete.

As well as assessing abundance, when species are found measurements of shell size are taken, and a small non-invasive tag is attached to the exterior shell. Through this project, we hope to broaden our understanding of the distribution and population connectivity of green ormers across the Channel Islands.

If you find a tagged ormer please let us know:
ramsar@alderneywildlife.org



A Brief History of Our Reserves

Thomas Marceau - Conservation Officer

At the turn of the millennium, a scientific study of pollen found beneath Longis Common painted a picture of prehistoric Alderney. Nearly 6000 years ago, Alderney was still an island covered in trees. Longis itself was home to a lightly wooded area, made up mostly of oak, hazel and alder. By 4000 B.P., with the arrival of Man, and cattle, the environment had shifted to species-rich grassland maintained by grazing. Cut to the early 21st century however, and wooded environments were now extremely scarce across Alderney with only 2% woodland cover compared to an average of 44% across European countries. Additionally, with the decline of traditional grazing practices since the Second World War, the once florally diverse Longis Common had fallen prey to bramble, bracken and coarse grasses. Since its inception in 2002, the Alderney Wildlife Trust has made the restoration of these two environment types – grassland and woodland - one of its highest priorities, through two major projects: the Alderney Grazing Animal Project (AGAP) and the Alderney Community Woodland (ACW).



LEFT: OAK BUDS - GUY EDWARDS

AGAP, established in 2003, at the very start of the AWT's life, sought to return the grasslands of Longis to their former glory through the re-introduction of grazing animals. Nearly two decades on, it has seen many evolutions through the years, with cows and ponies alternately making up the herd. Today, the AWT's grazing herd comprises just three cows. What has not changed is the aim of restoring the species-rich short grassland environment of Neolithic Alderney. From our studies, the AWT seems to have been relatively successful, with the number of species occurring increasing across the board in grazed areas. This suggests that, with increased grazing pressure, a shift away from dominating species like Sea Couch has taken place, allowing other floral species to make their return. Though surveyed at different times of year, Scarlet Pimpernel, Thyme-leaved Sandwort, Dove's-foot Crane's-bill, and Wall Speedwell, all flowering species found to be uncommon, rare or even absent in 2004 or 2011 were recorded often in 2019. The AWT will seek to confirm these changes through future studies taking place at the same time of year.

A sister reserve to Longis Nature Reserve was set up in 2004, called Vau du Saou. At the heart of the Vau du Saou reserve lies a vestige of the island's once expansive woodland, Alderney's last coastal woodland valley. This tree community



now includes native deciduous species (mostly planted by the AWT in 2003-4) such as hazel, ash

and alder, and large, fully grown non-native conifers. As well as woodland and coastal heathland, Alderney's last major area of wooded cliff-top valley habitat can be found in the reserve. Vau du Saou is known for its bluebells and year-round running water, which create an ethereal atmosphere. For this reason, it is always popular with walkers. In light of this fact, a German bunker was converted to an information point, the 'Wildlife Bunker', marrying military with natural history. Looking back, it is plain to see that the AWT began to engage the island's residents with their woodland earlier than the creation of the ACW, yet, due to its smaller size, the Vau du Saou reserve did not provide the scope required.

More recently, a second major project aiming to reshape Alderney's landscapes was instigated. With the support of the General Services Committee, and the use of States-owned land leased by the Alderney Golf Course and Arquiva Ltd, the goal of creating a mature, wooded area, populated by historically native species, coalesced to form the ACW development plan. The vision for the woodland was to take this impoverished habitat and restore

RIGHT: THE AGAP STEER / WOODED AREA IN THE VAU DU SAOU RESERVE

it to a state prior to human interference, while also providing educational, recreational, and even possibly even economic benefits for Alderney residents. In 2020, a decade after the first plantings took place; the woodland has experienced over 10,000 trees being planted. Many of these trees are now saplings that are thriving despite the island's sometimes difficult conditions. Nowadays, pear and apple trees in the Orchard can even be found blooming in spring. However, not everything has been straightforward in the development of this initiative, as emerging diseases threaten the fledgling woodland. In particular, ash dieback disease has already begun killing the Community Woodland's ash trees, which made up a high proportion of the earliest planted trees. The island also suffers from Dutch elm disease.

To combat this, the AWT joined the "Great British Elm Experiment" by planting an elm sapling whose parents had shown signs of resistance to the disease. We chose the Children's Area for this initiative, symbolising our hope for a new generation of elms across the British Isles.



The threat of disease belies wider wonderings over the future of our reserves. The management of Longis Common does require constant grazing, meaning that for the continued success



of Longis' grasslands, the AGAP must be maintained indefinitely. In the absence of a grazing animal herd, we would quickly witness a return to scrub.

Amphibious invasive plant species like *Crassula* also run rampant in Mannez Pond, and there is the risk of spread to Longis Pond and further afield. There is little in the way of control that is effective in curbing the establishment of such species, yet there is reason to be hopeful yet. Advances in science provide reassurance that there may be effective methods in future. The AWT is always deepening its understanding of its reserves' environments through its own survey work and using this knowledge to improve. As such, we become better able to justify our continued management of the area. Consequently, there is no reason to imagine that the future of Longis Reserve will be anything but bright.

What of the Community Woodland? How might it have evolved in 10, 50, 100 years' time? Assuming the threat of disease has been managed, many of the 11,000 trees planted in the past decade will have grown and matured into a complex community of mature woodland. In all likelihood, ash may be phased out due to ash dieback disease, but the woodland will still contain many species, including oak, hazel and even maybe Dutch elm disease resistant elms. Much of the uncertainty with the Community Woodland will derive from what other land-owners choose to do around the wooded areas. The AWT's vision for the woodland goes far beyond simply a wild space. The goal is for the woodland to provide many more resources for the inhabitants of Alderney. Picture a wild environment, complete with outdoor educational spaces to be used by the



school, a bountiful orchard where local produce can be collected and exchanged, and a system whereby felled trees can be used for timber in a sustainable manner. This is the ultimate trajectory for the Alderney Community Woodland, one which delivers on both the community and the woodland aspects of the scheme. Of course, much of this remains the realm of dreams, for now. Whether or not the ACW can deliver on this will depend on engagement from the community, as it is island residents who will shape the course that the woodland will take for generations to come.

From their primordial untamed wilderness, to a balance between nature and mankind mediated by grazing animals, to a state of disrepair, Alderney's natural reserves have seen much change over the millennia. Today, it has become the AWT's mission to care for these environments and ensure the maximum benefit for nature and people. Novel threats like invasive species and diseases have appeared and will surely shape the future of our reserves. New challenges will undoubtedly present themselves in the coming years but, through science and conservation, we can be confident that, despite it all, our reserves will evolve, endure and, maybe, even prosper.



Over to you
 Your membership helps ensure our work on the reserves can continue.
 To sign up please visit www.alderneywildlife.org/membership
 Thank you for your support!

LEFT: THE INVASIVE CRASSULA HELMSI (LIGHT GREEN) CHOKING MANNEZ POND

Habitat Engineers

Joshua Copping

For centuries humans have shaped landscapes by removing trees, grazing sheep and even flooding valleys to form reservoirs. but we aren't the only ones to form landscapes and ecosystems.

Ecosystem Engineers

Ecosystems are a structurally and ecologically complex feature of the natural world. Ecosystems are made up of a community of species which are specially adapted for life within that ecosystem (or habitat). When you look closely at a community, there is often at least one or even a group of species that create, modify and maintain the habitat. These key species are known as ecosystem engineers, and their work allows the wider community to thrive.

Autogenic Engineers

These species are what you may have in mind when thinking of an ecosystem engineer: they change the environment with their own physical structures, and as they grow and become larger, they create habitats for other organisms to live in or on. On land, the main example of autogenic engineers are trees, forming wooded areas which provide vital habitat and food sources for many other species. In the marine environment, the main engineers are corals and kelps, forming underwater

structures much like those on land. Marine species aggregate around coral reefs and kelp forests as they offer food and shelter from the open ocean and its predators.



EELGRASS

These beds act as a nursery for other marine organisms



Allogenic Engineers

Unlike autogenic engineers, allogenic engineer species change the environment by transforming resources. Perhaps the best example of this, and one that has been increasingly in the spotlight in recent years due to its engineering capabilities, is the beaver. By cutting down trees to dam streams and create ponds, beavers transform what is typically a wooded area into an open wetland glade within a woodland. Engineering by beavers alters the abundance and distribution of many species and has been shown to increase biodiversity at a landscape scale. In addition, we're slowly realising the huge economic benefit they provide in assisting with flood mitigation.

► Alderney Community

Woodland See how our young native trees are getting on, eleven years since the site's creation.

Alderney's engineers

Kelp

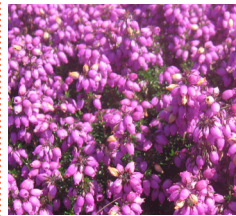
Kelp forests not only provide food and habitat for other species, but also sequester carbon - one of our most important marine habitats.



ALEXANDER MUSTARD

Heather

The dominant plant in a heath, which provides a home in Alderney for slow worm, Dartford warbler and emperor moths.



Oak

Oak trees support more diversity, particularly of insects, than any other tree. Many have been planted in the woodland.



ROSS HOODINOTT

Why Count Birds?

Justin Hart - Avian Ecologist

As a group of species, birds make ideal candidates for regular counting or monitoring. They are useful indicators of the state of the environment and, perhaps because of their charisma, are key species in education and public awareness. They are also easily identified and simpler to locate than many other taxonomic groups and this means reliable baseline counts of birds can be recorded from most places they occur. Baseline counts of any species are key for conservationists as it's not possible to investigate the cause of a decline if you do not have baseline figures.



Unfortunately, it's simply too impractical to regularly count every species, but monitoring a few is still very useful, particularly if it is carried out long-term.

Consequently, reliable baseline counts of birds makes regular monitoring important as there is a real chance to identify future changes in distribution, abundance and diversity. Armed with this ability to detect change, conservationists can then make appropriate evidence-based decisions to guide their actions in the future. For example, monitoring birds can help identify the success or failure of conservation management schemes in protected areas, the impacts of changes in land use, fishing practices and developments at sea or direct threats like persecution and pollution.

Bird counting has other uses too, particularly now legislative changes require developers to take into consideration the impact of developments on the environment. Used extensively in environmental impact assessments (EIAs), bird surveys contribute to the environmental information planning

authorities demand in an application for a development. Bird surveys, as part of an EIA for an area proposed for development, can establish the presence of an important population of birds and its distribution. This information then makes it possible to decide if the development will have an impact. Furthermore, as some species are specially protected and their presence may halt a development or require adequate mitigation, reliable and adequate bird counts can have significant financial leverage and importance.

In the UK there is a long history of bird counting, largely undertaken by volunteers and coordinated by NGOs such as the BTO, RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts in conjunction with the government's statutory body for conservation, the JNCC. Examples include the breeding bird survey (BBS), the wetland bird survey (WeBS), the seabird monitoring programme (SMP) and, of course, the RSPB or BTO's Garden BirdWatch. The results of these bird counts are of great value and form the criteria used to designate a species' importance in national and international lists. In the UK, the JNCC and NGOs have set up the list of birds of conservation concern based on these survey data. Species are designated according to their decline and range contractions and rated green, amber or red to indicate an increasing level of concern. On an international level, bird counts have also enabled Birdlife International to define many species' global status using IUCN threat categories.

In addition, once a site is identified as carrying important numbers of birds, the area may become a candidate for special protection. EU directives dictate that areas regularly supporting 1% or more of a global population are of international importance. Sites that support >1% of a national population are deemed of national importance. Such

24 DARTFORD WARBLER TERRITORIES WERE FOUND IN PARTS OF THE ISLAND WHERE THE AWT CARRIED OUT BREEDING BIRD SURVEYS. ALSO CONFIRMED WERE BREEDING SKYLARKS. WRENS WERE MOST COMMON AT A DENSITY BETWEEN 1.8 AND 1.2 TERRITORIES PER HECTARE.

sites qualify as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). In the case of SPAs governments are legally bound to ensure certain conservation criteria are met and the level of conservation importance does not deteriorate. Indeed, it was by counting the gannets on Les Etacs and Ortac that we were able to establish the colonies' international importance and as a result help designate Alderney's Ramsar site.

Knowledge about bird populations obtained by counts can be enhanced by additional means of studying them such as bird ringing, tagging with electronic devices and nest recording.

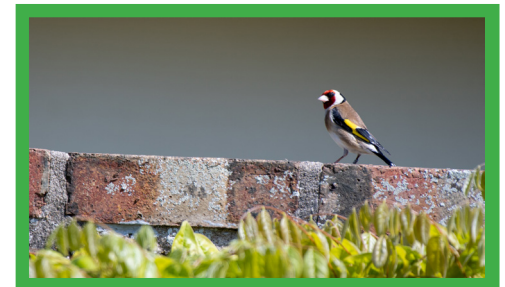
A common misconception about ringing is that its main purpose is to identify the wintering grounds of migrants. While that may have been the original intention when, for example, the BTO set up its ringing scheme in the U.K. over a century ago, the chances of ringed birds being located in their wintering grounds are very slim and have even declined more recently. Today, more advanced tracking methods using GPS tags are fast proving a more reliable method of specifying destinations, routes and flight times.

The true value of bird ringing and nest recording, in combination with bird counting, is the role it plays in understanding species declines. In simple terms bird numbers are determined by the number of fledglings produced and the survival of those young and the adults that raised them. If nest recorders collect data on productivity and ringers collect data on survival, population modellers can assess the relative influence of each on population trends, generated by bird counters. This is essential information for conservationists attempting to reverse declines (after all, there's no point providing better nesting habitat if numbers are dropping due to starvation over winter) and the subject of much scientific research.

Together, bird counting, ringing, tagging and nest recording are part of an ongoing,

proactive commitment by organisations like the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and BTO to chart the health of our wildlife. And given the ever-increasing list of potential threats, from climate change to habitat destruction, the efforts of naturalists to count species across the globe are more valuable now than ever before.

The BTO have made their year-round Garden BirdWatch free for all to take part. Go to bto.org to sign up and contribute to national data sets!



Goldfinch - Up 50% in the RSPB big garden birdwatch since 2010 (green listed)



Dunnock - Present in 6% fewer gardens in 2020 than 2019 (amber listed).



House Sparrow - the most common bird in the RSPB count, down 53% since 1979 (red listed).

DUNNOCK - NEIL ALDRIDGE / HOUSE SPARROW - RICHARD BURKMAR

Volunteers Matter

Claire Thorpe - Head of Outreach



(which much of our work entails) significantly boost health and wellbeing, but volunteers specifically relating to wildlife projects feel an even bigger positive effect on their mental health than with other

types of volunteering.

While we are all spending more time at home there are still ways you can help the AWT. We are trying to digitise some of our paper records so we can map trends and patterns from the past six years. If you would like to help with this project do get in touch:

admin@alderneywildlife.org

Looking at the bigger picture of Alderney's environment, our volunteers play a vital role. So thank you to everyone who volunteers with us and we look forward to hopefully welcoming more of you in the future.

In
numbers

18,485

The estimated number of hours given by our volunteers in 2019 to help the wildlife and environment of Alderney.

This covers a wide range of activities including beach cleans, tree planting and clearing invasive species.

www.alderneywildlife.org/how-you-can-help

Migrating Marine Giants

Mel Broadhurst-Allen - Marine Ecologist

Many species in the marine environment move and migrate; some vast distances crossing whole oceans, whilst others loiter in their local waters. The drivers for these movements can be for food, habitat selection or reproduction, as well as just 'going with the flow'. For marine conservationists, managing migratory marine species can be complex, as these species are obviously not aware of differing countries' territorial waters or their differing conservation activities, legislation or goals.

One example is tope (*Galerhinus galeus*), a highly migratory shark species which can travel over 16,000km. Such distances are usually undertaken in the summer, moving towards the poles. It is found worldwide in temperate seas, except western Atlantic and western Pacific waters, and they are frequently spotted within Alderney's territorial waters. Sharks, including tope, are considered important apex predators within the marine food chain. Tope are considered vulnerable by the IUCN, due to population decline from fishing (for meat and liver oil) and bycatch combined with this species' late maturity and low reproductive potential.

Despite several world-wide conservation bodies' agreements, scientific recommendations and reviews stating the importance of conserving this species. We still lack direct, wide-scale conservation measures in most countries. Across the Indian Ocean, the Americas and Caribbean there is no conservation effort, with Africa simply recommending a recreational

fishing bag limit. Conversely, in Australia, measures include limited commercial fishing (i.e. size of individual and size of mesh net), nursery area closure, and recreational bag limits.

Closer to home in the UK, conservation measures and legislation comprise reduced commercial fishing effort, such as enforcing a day-limit catch rate and only allowing recreational anglers to catch from land. Here in the Bailiwick, limited conservation effort or legislation exists, with only commercial fishing restrictions emplaced whereby fishers cannot retain, relocate, tranship or land tope.

The obvious answer to enhance this current patchy protection is to push for a more coordinated, world-wide approach. But this can be tricky for countries that have little core scientific evidence of tope in their waters, such as Alderney. Projects such as the Helgoland Tope Tagging Project are vital in providing evidence for these countries. Tagging aims to characterise tope movement and behavioural patterns across the North Sea, to help inform current or new marine protected areas and identify further conservation measures. Interestingly, tags have been lost from tope on more than one occasion within Alderney's waters. This could help identify the importance of the Channel Islands for tope, to hopefully provide a strong argument to enhance our current conservation legislation and management activities.



TOPE SHARK: PETER VERHOOG / HELGOLAND TAGGING PROJECT MAP



Bee Friendly Gardens

Jo Woodnutt & Ian Corder - Little Island Leaves

Why help bees and butterflies?

We all love to see bees and butterflies around the garden and the countryside, and here in Alderney we have some rare species such as the Glanville Fritillary, *Melitaea cinxia*. But even the common species play an important role in

pollinating the flowers of plants which go on to produce food for us. One study found that bees and other insects pollinate over €150 billion of food crops each year! So

as well as helping keep our natural world healthy, supporting bees and butterflies also ensures we can enjoy apples, strawberry and many other fruit and vegetables.

Which plants and flowers do bees and butterflies like?

Bees and butterflies visit flowers to drink the nectar produced by the plant in glands called 'nectaries'. Plants benefit from this relationship by attaching their pollen to the visiting insects, which is then transferred to other flowers to fertilise them.

Over many years, plants have evolved flowers which attract pollinating insects from a distance. This attraction can be by smell, or also visually. The bright colours and

patterns on a flower identify it as a food source to a pollinator, and can even signal how the insect should approach or enter the flower in order to receive its sugary reward.

However, insects don't see exactly the same colours as us. They have very different eyes, and can sometimes see into parts of the spectrum that we can't. For example, Bees can see ultra-violet light which is a shorter wavelength than we can see, but not as far into the red end of the spectrum as we can, and so the best flowers to attract bees are often blue, purple or white.

Butterflies also have complex eyes, and some species are similar to bees in preferring the cooler blue and purple colours. However, other butterfly species can see into the red end of the spectrum, such as swallowtails.

How can you help?

Clearly, planting flowers which are attractive to bees and butterflies is a big help (especially when they are native species!). Wildflower seed mixes are inexpensive and can be added to bare ground or existing patches of lawn grass. You might like to plant

cowslips, red clover, Campanula, Centaurea and Phacelia, herbs like chives, marjoram and sage, or flowers like



WHITE TAILED BUMBLEBEE ON HONEYSUCKLE - DAVID TIPLING
COMMON BLUE BUTTERFLY ON KNAPWEED - JON HAWKINS - SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

CAMPANULA ROTUNDIFLORA KEIRON HUSTON



foxgloves or goldenrod *Solidago*. If you are planting trees and shrubs, then consider crab apple, hawthorn or lilac. And finally, climbers like honeysuckle, passion flower and Clematis will also attract different pollinator species as well as providing scent and colour to your garden. Pollinators also need shelter, and there are great designs for 'bee hotels' which encourage different kinds of bee such as solitary bees. But it's also worth thinking about providing space for pollinators at different stages of their life cycle. Caterpillars will often need different plants from the adult butterflies – for example, many species such as painted lady and red admiral will lay their eggs on nettle plants. Leaving parts of your garden wild, with a good range of native plants such as nettles, docks and grasses, will allow the eggs and larvae of butterflies and moths to find a home.

Lastly, and most obviously, don't spray! Most pesticides are completely indiscriminate and will affect all insects rather than their target. By wiping out pest species, you would also deprive the predators of their prey, or even cause pesticides to build

up and kill the predators themselves. There are many ways of dealing with pests organically, or by planning your gardening and planting to grow 'companion' plants (those which attract the pests to them and save other plants nearby).

Given the current Coronavirus lockdown, Little Island Leaves @ Longis will not be opening on 11th April as planned. However, we are planning lots of updates on our Facebook page, and will be showcasing our plant stock with virtual walkrounds, live video streaming and home deliveries when possible. We have hundreds of flowers, shrubs and vegetables, many of them pollinator friendly, soon to be ready for your gardens and allotments, so make sure to follow us to find out more!



Little Island Leaves



www.facebook.com/littleislandleaves

Watch news



The Watch group was busy at the start of the year, beginning with the fourth Big Channel Islands Beach Clean. We took part with Guernsey and Jersey and together we had almost 200 volunteers and collected over 340kg of rubbish. More positively we also picked up 16 mermaid's purses – the egg cases of sharks and ray species. The beach clean links in to our work on the gannet colonies, seeing how much plastic they are bringing back for their nests and how many die from entanglement. We record how much litter we collect and get a rough idea of the types we pick up, helping add to national pressure in the UK to get brands to reduce their plastic footprint.

Also in January was the Big Garden Birdwatch, with data collected by the RSPB each year on trends in garden birds. A lot of you might have taken part through school or at home. The most common bird seen is usually the sparrow, we look forward to the results of the 2020 watch soon.

In February we held a winter foraging walk, looking for edible species of plant in the colder months. We found lots to try, but the favourites seemed to be gorse, daisies and the feathery leaves of yarrow.

Don't forget the Wildlife Watch website (www.wildlifewatch.org.uk) has hundreds of spotter sheets, with wildlife to look out for on your local patch, and activity sheets for wildlife themed crafts, games and education. Why not have a go at making these beeswax wraps for yourself so you don't need to wrap leftovers in clingfilm or foil? We'd love to see how you get on!

Make beeswax wraps



You will need

- 100% cotton fabric (washed and dried)
- Beeswax pellets
- Paint brush (new)
- Oven and baking tray
- Scissors or pinking shears
- Baking parchment

Reduce your use of plastic by making beeswax wraps for your food...

- 1 Cut your fabric to the size you want to make the wrap.
 30cm x 30cm is a good size for wrapping your sandwiches!
 Pinking shears make a zig zag cut which helps prevent fraying.
- 2 Preheat the oven to 85°C. Next, place your fabric on top of a sheet of baking parchment on a baking tray.
- 3 Spread beeswax pellets over the fabric... make sure they are equally distributed.
- 4 Pop the tray in the oven. Keep watching and take it out when the beeswax has melted, make sure it doesn't burn!
- 5 Use your paint brush to smooth the wax over the whole wrap. If the wax starts to harden as you do this, just pop it back in the oven.
- 6 Remove your wrap from the tray and hang up to dry – it shouldn't take long to set.

Don't forget to get an adult to help you

Avoid wrapping meat

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Wash the wraps in cold water with some diluted washing up liquid, and air dry. If the wax starts to go crispy, add some more wax and reheat in the oven, or recycle them and make a fresh batch.

Visiting a UK reserve



Richard Grogan - Lead Officer, Isle of Wight AONB

After three years hard work by officers of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Beauty Partnership, the Isle of Wight, the Solent and much of the waters around the island were declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on 19th June 2019.

This accolade was a recognition that the Isle of Wight, unlike much of the adjacent English mainland, had not suffered the common issues causing ecological decline. The issues such as overwhelming residential development, road and rail infrastructure and environmentally damaging farming practices had made less of an impact on the Island over the past decades due to the severance issues common to all Island communities.



Species, highly threatened or lost from the mainland, thrive on the island such as Glanville fritillary, oxtongue broomrape, wood calamint, water vole, reddish buff moth and field cowwheat. The island's woodlands are unique with red squirrels, hazel dormouse, Barbastelle bats and Bechstein bats thriving without the influence of grey squirrels or deer.

The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve celebrates three important aspects of the Isle of Wight's connection between its ecology and its human residents:

- The importance of its unique natural and cultural assets and their importance to the community;
- The importance of using these assets to help to raise awareness both with residents and visitors of the importance of these assets for their wellbeing and the services they provide
- As an important resource for research into sustainable practices to be shared to a wider UNESCO community

Working closely with local government, the Isle of Wight tourist industry, national and local government agencies, national and local conservation NGOs, special interest organisations and expert individuals the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership will use the designation to improve the natural capital of the Island. The ecosystem services provided will be for the good of the local community and visitors and future generations of islanders.



BECHSTEIN BAT (RICHARD GROGAN) & HAZEL DORMOUSE (DANNY GREEN)

BACK COVER: GANNETS RETURN IN FEBRUARY - JACK BUSH

Get in touch

We would love to hear your
thoughts, questions and ideas
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Photography credits to Bill Black, Josh Copping, Lindsay Pyne, Sandy Robertson and David Wedd.
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