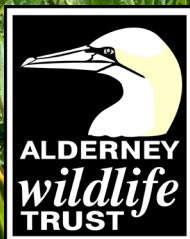


ALDERNEY WILDLIFE



SUMMER 2020 | MEASURING SUCCESS

Protecting Alderney's wildlife for the future



Editorial

As lockdown eased across the Bailiwick, this summer has flown by in Alderney. In particular, our walks and tours programme has proved very popular, engaging people from across the Bailiwick with the island's wildlife and nature as well as the AWT's work. When it came around to choosing a topic for the second edition of Alderney Wildlife this year the theme of Measuring Success seemed an obvious choice. With work streams having been affected or slowed early in the year, certain projects postponed and a smaller team than usual, it will be important for the AWT to explore which aspects of our work we have managed successfully in 2020. Of course, this year provides truly exceptional circumstances, but we must not waste this chance to thoroughly review the work we do and the effect we are having on the island's wildlife and environment.

The future of our natural world has never been more uncertain, and the current pandemic adds multiple extra layers to the threats facing the environment. From changes to laws that should protect wildlife and habitats in order to 'revive the economy', to cuts to available funding for conservation projects, things are going to get even tougher before they get better. While there has been a lot of talk of a green recovery, few countries have put solid plans in place to see this through.

However, during lockdown opinion polls have clearly shown that the public's appreciation and love for nature is growing. Environmental charities must show clearly that the work they are doing is having a positive and lasting effect on the planet if they are to survive.

In this edition I hope we show you how the AWT is doing this and some of the ways in which we hope to expand and improve on our impact monitoring in the future.

Claire



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Taking the Positives from the year

In April we found ourselves plunged into lockdown and I wrote in my Manager's Report of our need to maintain focus on the task at hand, of the dangers of allowing the global pandemic to divert us from our core work - 'Protecting Alderney's Environment for the Future'.

I can't express how proud I am of all of the staff and the volunteer team who did exactly that. Despite being locked away from each other, the whole team adapted and boy, did they work. Not only did they manage the stresses and maintain their focus, they used their own personal time to support the community, be it keeping footpaths open and clearing tree guards for exercise, or helping the school and children stuck at home with interactive materials.

As the Bailiwick enters a state of 'remission', we can reflect on what has been achieved. Hundreds of hours of seabird and marine monitoring, alongside dozens of terrestrial surveys, helping us assess the health of our island wildlife. Several new studies have also been established including a pan-Channel Island pollinator study in conjunction with The Pollinator Project and Bristol University.

We have to admit that some work has had to be delayed, such as new studies on our hedgehogs and planned working with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC). However, for example, our countryside management and conservation effort, though a little behind in places, has helped enhance an already spectacular year for wildflowers.

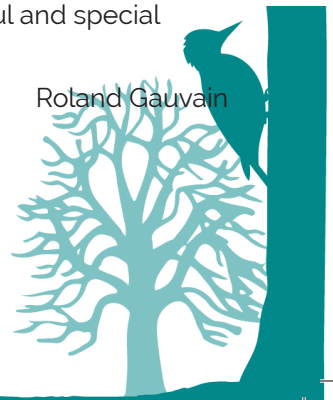
A key focus coming into autumn is the development of the Alderney Record Centre, with the AWT about to enter a new relationship with a number of recording bodies. This will create a true public record resource and will support the work of the States as it moves to ratify the first 'Wildlife Act' for the island, after nearly 20 years of AWT campaigning.

Despite all this I would be remiss if I didn't let our membership know that the AWT does need to focus on its future. There is at least a 30% loss in revenue still forecast, despite the amazing support of our members and visitors and residents to the island. We are now focusing on getting the best from Guernsey staycations and showing visitors how truly beautiful and special Alderney is.

NOTICE

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown the AGM of the AWT has been delayed until the Autumn. The Board will notify the membership as to a date for the AGM as soon as possible.

Roland Gauvain





News round-up

Volunteering during Lockdown

In late March, Conservation Volunteers were put on hold for the first time in the history of the Alderney Wildlife Trust due to measures put in place during the 2020 Covid pandemic. As restrictions loosened and the phases passed, CV sessions were able to begin anew starting from the 3rd of June. At first operating under strict social distancing rules, CVs are now back in full force at their usual times of 2pm on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Since then, CVs both new and veteran alike, have been hard at work completing tasks which would be impossible to tackle alone, such as the removal of invasive species like sour fig and clearing overgrown paths which grew wild during lockdown.

Many volunteers refused to rest on their laurels even during a pandemic. Our volunteers kindly used some of their two hours of daily outdoor activity during lockdown to continue our usual CV activities, such as removing tree



guards in the Alderney Community Woodland. By the end of lockdown, they had accumulated hundreds of tree guards, which required a session in itself to move to the impot!

Puffin Cam

The three cameras on Burhou this year kept more people than ever entertained and engaged with the seabirds on Burhou. Over 50,000 viewers tuned in to watch the puffin antics from April - August this year, and there were over 600,000 views on the site! This is testament to how much the natural world has helped people during lockdown and quarantines across the world - as the figures for this year are around five times higher than in 2019.



The team will look at ways to continue improving on the cameras, including better placement away from glare off the water. If you enjoyed watching the cameras and have any feedback please do get in touch with Jack on ramsar@alderneywildlife.org

The Benefits of Volunteering

Before I moved to Alderney a little over a year ago, writes Anna Hunt, friends asked me what I would do on such a small island and of course I told them there would be plenty to do! It helps having a job of course, but my passion is walking and being outdoors with nature and my camera.

I always had the AWT in my sights even before I moved over and I did a beach clean or two and some Sour Fig clearing, but my job and other commitments meant that I wasn't getting enough time to get out and about with the incredibly hard working team of volunteers to add any real value. I felt bad about that!

I had also however put my name down to help out in their beautiful shop on Victoria Street and was so excited just before the summer holidays (I work at the school) to get a call asking if I'd do a regular slot. I've done 10 or so afternoons now and I love being there surrounded by beautiful things. When there's an odd 10 minutes or so I get to have a mooch around and buy little gifts for friends and family, but I've also had the pleasure of choosing one or two items from the wholesalers' catalogues and pricing new ranges up as they arrive.

Best of all are the customers, many of whom this summer have been



from Guernsey and Sark coming in to book boat trips and wildlife walks. Their

feedback has been so encouraging and positive about our very special island, particularly from those who'd never been here before. They have been overwhelmed by the pro-activity of the AWT and tell me how blessed we are to have a team who so passionately look after our environment and wildlife. They say they'll be back. I've no reason to doubt them.

Once the summer is over, I'm looking forward to putting some of the new Christmas stock on the shelves. I wonder what I'll find to keep me company?

Hedge Veg

The new website

www.myhedgeveg.com

launched recently, showcasing where you can find locally grown fruit and veg or other local products like eggs to buy, or advertise your products as a producer.

Developed by part-time Alderney resident Derek Chandler, the website is a great way to keep an eye out for local produce. This has the added benefit of often having little or no packaging!



Invasive Species Control

Thomas Marceau, Conservation Officer

Invasive species have emerged as one of the major concerns in modern-day conservation. For as long as humans have been travelling the globe, they have been introducing, either deliberately or accidentally, many organisms into environments which they are not native to. Climate change has also facilitated the spread of species into areas which were previously inhospitable to them, while forcing native species away. Nowhere is the threat of invasive species more pressing than on small, isolated islands like Alderney, where a combination of small population sizes, limited resources and an absence of natural predators or competition mean that invasives can be particularly damaging to native species.

On the island of Alderney, we deal with all sorts of invasive species. These range from smothering plant species that have unfurled on our coastlines and ponds to novel insect pests and marine species establishing themselves in our warming waters. The Alderney Wildlife Trust, along with the States of Alderney, does its best to control such species. However, measuring the success

of control measures quickly becomes difficult. Take for example the Asian Hornet, which has rapidly made itself at home in France since it arrived from China in 2004. While the States of Alderney, with AWT staff, have been very effective at removing queens before they establish a colony, it seems inevitable that these hornets - relentlessly expanding through France and the rest of Europe - will eventually colonise the Channel Islands and, ultimately, the entirety of the British Isles. Every successful year of control in Alderney may be negated by further hornets venturing over from France the following year. In a scenario where total eradication seems out of reach, success must then be counted in each year where an invasion has been pushed back. In the case of Asian hornets, which prey upon pollinators, every year they are unable to take hold on Alderney is another pressure taken off our pollinating insects, which are facing global declines and which we depend upon both ecologically and economically.

A similar issue applies to both the New Zealand pygmyweed which has overrun Mannez pond, and the sour fig on our coastline, with the key difference being that their invasion of Alderney is already complete. New Zealand pygmyweed has choked out much of the invertebrate life in Mannez Pond: a 2019 survey of the dragonfly and damselfly



PHILLIP PRECEY

ASIAN HORNET - THE GUERNSEY HORNET GROUP



A trailer full of removed sour fig



Crassula Helmsii or New Zealand pygmyweed

diversity recorded only one species of dragonfly in Mannez, despite it having been a hotspot for dragonfly activity in the past. Conservation volunteers have, over the years, devoted much time and energy into clearing the pond of this plant, but it is too well established to feasibly eradicate at this point in time. So, should we consider our control measures to have been a failure? Perhaps, in the case of Mannez pond. However, Longis pond remains clear and suitable for dragonflies for now and our monitoring aims to ensure that it remains this way. Advances in control techniques may mean that one day we will be able to remove this invasive plant from Mannez. This should be the ultimate goal when considering successes in the management of invasive species. In the meantime, efforts will need to be made to restore the pond for dragonflies and achieving this could be considered a partial success.

Sour fig also requires considerable resources to remove. Like New Zealand pygmyweed, many hours of volunteer work have gone into slowing the spread of sour fig, and the smaller, but equally invasive angular sea-fig. However, these species native to South Africa and Australia respectively,

are nonetheless found all around Alderney's coastline and outcompete many of our native plant species. They can even permanently alter the soil composition, making it harder for native plants to return after clearance. Total eradication of sour fig is difficult for two reasons. The first is that much of it is located on hard to reach areas such as cliff faces. The second is that sour fig is still deliberately imported and planted in gardens. Therefore, a way of measuring success in curbing the spread of such a species depends on how effective our outreach and awareness efforts are in informing the public of the issues that come with keeping sour fig in your garden.

Finding the successes when dealing with 'no-win' scenarios like the spread of invasive species can sometimes seem discouraging. Many hours of community effort begin to feel like postponing the inevitable. However, keeping the problem species contained as best we can allows our native wildlife to thrive just a little longer, and allows time for scientific breakthroughs and public campaigning to occur. Advances in technology and shifts in public opinion towards problematic species can lead to long-term solutions. For this reason, hope for a future where Alderney may be free of invasives does exist, and success lies in keeping our indigenous species going long enough for us to reach that day.



Insect Report

David Wedd



Grassland flowers at
Houmet Herbe

Alderney in the Lockdown period early this year must have been at its most beautiful ever. Spring flowers were blooming everywhere: bluebells and three-cornered leeks in purple and white – but above all the meadows were brilliant golden, with celandines first, then buttercups. Until this spring, one might speak of the fields being yellow in March and April without ever believing that they could be unbroken golden sheets, but all the meadows were covered in myriads of tiny suns.



May and June continued the good weather of Spring and with the Lockdown still keeping people at home, the parks and gardens were especially beautiful, while the Market Gardens were smart and flourishing. The coastal grasslands showed a fantastic range of flowers.

Butterflies were in big numbers, with the migratory species especially prominent. Sometimes this migration can be startling. Red Admirals are abundant here in Alderney, and they migrate through the island in large batches early and late in the year, but 2020 witnessed an influx the likes of which we hadn't seen before. The small buddleia bushes in the Clos at the top of the Valley are always an attraction for the admirals and two or three of the butterflies are

usually on the blooms. This year all was normal through May; then on 22nd a big migration of (mainly) Red Admirals was reported on the south and east coasts of Alderney and on 23rd May there were up to 25 on the buddleia! The following day most had moved on.



Red
Admiral on
Buddleia



Privet Hawk Moth

It has been an outstanding year for Large and Small Whites, and on the island they are less keen to eat cabbages, and more attracted by the many species of wild brassica that grow in the grassland, and above all by nasturtiums which bloom in so many gardens. Many species of butterfly have appeared in vast numbers all over Alderney, particularly Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Small Copper, and at time of writing Gatekeepers are just emerging – probably our commonest butterfly of all.

The moth traps are having a very successful year, and we are now putting them on more sparingly, once midweek, and once at the weekend for the Garden Moth Scheme. For the first time ever we had Privet Hawks in all three traps that were on (in the Valley; at Theo and Poppy's light in their garden; and at Essex Farm where Jack and Tom are making a real success of the trap there.)

It has been an extraordinary year for May Bugs (Cockchafer Beetles) which are in reduced numbers by July and August, but earlier in the year were appearing 50+ at a time in the Valley trap and in large numbers in the others. As the May Bugs fade, Garden Chafers take over - very similar but about half the size and half the number. The most abundant moth is the Orange Footman, commonest in the Valley, where for weeks on end 30 or 40 a night in the trap is normal but occasionally the tally is a hundred or more.

The only 'new' moth in 2020 so far is the micro *Ethmia quadrilella*, which was in the Valley trap on the night of Friday 10th July. This is the first record for Alderney, but Roger Long has recorded it in Jersey several times in recent years. It is a very beautiful black and white moth but too small for even the best of our local photographers.

This Autumn there is likely to be a mass emergence of our beautiful Jersey Tiger Moths, which are never rare in Alderney, but this spring the caterpillars have been present on a big variety of wild and garden plants. In particular they have been abundant on the lower leaves of the giant echium, often feeding openly by day. Their black and orange colouring forecasts the shades of the moths to come... We look forward to seeing big numbers of the lovely Tigers, which fly both by day and by night.



Cockchafer Beetles in a moth trap



Orange Footman moths



Jersey Tiger moth and caterpillars



Success in the Marine Environment

Dr Mel Broadhurst-Allen, Marine Ecologist

Measuring success in the marine environment is excitingly complex. It often starts by spending some time selecting specific sites, habitats or species, across a variety of marine zones such as the seafloor, the water column and intertidal coast, bays and beaches. We may need the data for various reasons; such as evaluating habitats of conservation importance for management objectives, identifying species vulnerable to a specific natural/human induced impact, conducting scientific research or establishing monitoring projects for coastal development planning.

Defining what 'measuring success' is in relation to the marine environment, is usually the next stage. This could be comparing the extent or area of a marine habitat with another or the number of marine species within an area over time. By this time you begin thinking about the type of survey method you require to collect this evidence, in a robust manner. Survey methods can be desk-based (i.e. designing nifty computerised models to measure success) or field-based (strap your wellies on/launch the ROV and start recording), or a combination of the two. The work includes selecting the appropriate statistics and report writing techniques to tell the good, the bad or the ugly side of 'measuring success' for your selected site, habitat or species within your selected zone, from your chosen survey methods.

Photography is now considered a key tool for desk-based and field-based surveys, including studies which aim to



measure

success within the marine environment. Photographs can provide that important snap-shot in time or space, to compare the success of a site, habitat or species, either at a local or global level. An example of photography as a tool to measure success within Alderney's waters is aerial photography of the eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) bed within Longis Bay. This species forms large fields of grass like blades within the shallows of our sandy substrates. It is an extremely important habitat providing shelter and food for a plethora of species, including fish, wildfowl, invertebrates, diatoms and marine algae.

The States of Guernsey's partner, Digimap Ltd, takes high resolution aerial photographs of the Channel Islands every few years by aeroplane, primarily for land planning matters. The AWT are allowed to use the aerial photographs for nature conservation objectives, such as mapping habitats. Comparing several aerial photographs of Longis Bay taken from 2001 – 2019, it can be seen that the location and size of the eelgrass bed significantly changes and grows substantially over the years, but with a noticeable decline in 2019.

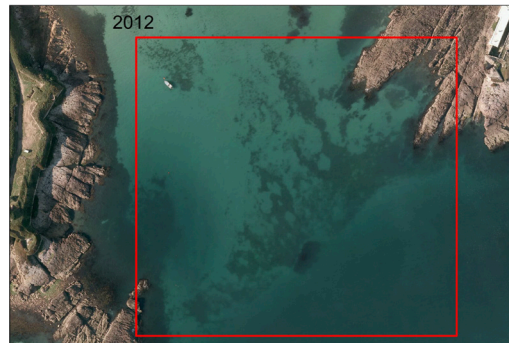
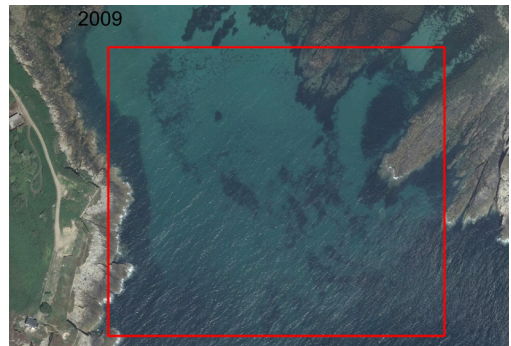
This initial, qualitative assessment is particularly important for us. It can help us plan how to accurately measure the success of this important marine habitat within Alderney's waters, over time.

We can look to devise field-based surveys to validate the extent of this bed, through snorkel or drop-down video camera techniques. We can use desk-based techniques to measure the eelgrass bed's area to compare with other beds across the Channel Islands to see if their beds also changed during the same time period. We can consider the natural and human induced impacts shaping the eelgrass beds, such as extreme weather or tide events and local sewage treatment, and consider initiating long-term research projects. We can also begin to think about how to engage with key stakeholders and the public on the importance of eelgrass beds, to help us implement conservation measures, such as eco-friendly moorings and protective legislation.

In essence, photography is an effective and easy-to-use tool to help measure the success of important features within the marine environment, such as eelgrass beds. A photograph can strike a chord with anyone at any time. You never know, these photographs may be spotted by a local government official or civil servant who'll go on to kickstart a movement and help the AWT achieve it's core objectives.



Changes in eelgrass beds in Longis bay 2001-2019



The Value of Nest Recording

Justin Hart - Avian Ecologist

For a Blue Tit it may only last 5-6 weeks; for a Gannet 6-7 months, but whatever the species the nesting season is a pivotal stage in a bird's life cycle that determines how many birds are recruited into the next generation. If we are to fully understand the factors responsible for population changes it is essential that we have a good understanding of the reproductive behaviour of birds and the environmental pressures that influence their breeding success.

Despite the importance of studying nesting birds, it is surprising how little attention is paid to this task by modern day birdwatchers. Recent advances in technology have helped to improve birders' identification skills, the understanding of migration and ways of measuring survival, yet the knowledge and field craft required to monitor nests has, if anything, regressed and gone backwards.

Many otherwise knowledgeable bird watchers are completely unfamiliar with the nesting habits of even our commonest birds and would be left nonplussed when asked to describe, for example, a Blackcap's egg or how to find its nest. The demise in knowledge about this key aspect in ornithology has occurred with a fall in popularity in nest finding as an arm of birding activity among the last and latest

generations of bird watchers. This likely occurred following the introduction of the 1954 Protection of Birds Act which was designed to curtail egg collecting, and rightly so. However, in so doing, the passing of the Act also banned a practice that often roused a lifelong interest in birds and the natural environment by those school kids pursuing it. It has also stigmatised legitimate nest finding for biological monitoring in the eyes of some bird watchers and members of the public.



Nevertheless, nest recording has a key role to play in conservation. In the UK and Channel Islands the population trends of our birds are monitored by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) which gets some funding from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). Accurate data on the breeding success of bird populations is vital to help calculate likely trends in the future. These data are mostly provided by volunteer nest recorders through the BTO's Nest Record Scheme (NRS). Some 600+ registered nest

LEFT: RINGED PLOVER NEST

Nests and eggs come in all shapes and sizes...



Dartford Warbler nest



Nightjar nest



recorders submit around +30,000 nest records annually. As a result, the NRS is the primary source of information on the breeding success of our bird populations and, in combination with population counts made by bird watchers and survival estimates obtained from bird ringing data, help inform conservation decision making and government policy.

Nest recorders find nests and record their contents at regular intervals through the breeding cycle. This provides information on clutch and brood sizes but also changes in the number of eggs or chicks between visits and nestling feather development which can be used to back calculate likely laying dates. Pooled data sets for each species can then be analysed in a clever way to estimate nest survival and this enables the proportion of nesting attempts that will likely fail per day through the whole nesting cycle (from the first egg date to when the last chick fledges) to be presented for each species.

NRS data have enabled the BTO to calculate trends in productivity for

over 90 species since 1966. Each year the trends are updated and published online as part of the Breeding Birds of the Wider Countryside report. The annual estimates of breeding success in combination with estimates of survival have helped determine which has driven changes in the abundance of these species. Furthermore, because the NRS has been operating over such a long time the data has also played a key role in demonstrating the impact of climate change. For example, research by the BTO has shown that the laying dates of several species has advanced in response to warmer spring weather, raising concerns that an increasing mismatch between the timing of hatching and peak prey availability may reduce productivity in the future.

Does nest monitoring have an effect on outcome?

Short answer; no, if done correctly. It is vital that any visits made to a nest for the purposes of monitoring do not have a detrimental impact on the nest outcome. This is important both for the welfare of the birds but also the reliability of the data. To ensure safe and successful nest monitoring all BTO registered nest recorders must follow a strict code of conduct. Scientific research has shown that visiting the nests of solitary nesting species has no significant effect on the outcome as long as sufficient care is taken while monitoring. The BTO code of conduct neatly lays out how to take the

RIGHT: SKYLARK CHICKS IN THE NEST



nest

Oystercatcher nest

Sparrowhawk nest



right approach and helps ensure nest recorders do not unduly jeopardise any nesting attempt. The welfare of the birds is paramount and a nest must not

be approached if it cannot be done so without influencing the outcome.

This article was prepared using extracts from a BTO guide book 'A Field Guide to Monitoring Nests' by James Ferguson-Lees, Richard Castell and Dave Leech. If you want to find out more about the nest record scheme you can go online and visit BTO website using the following link:

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nrs>

Any nest records are always welcome but the BTO are particularly keen to obtain more from NRS priority species. These are species with few records or submissions that are declining rapidly and can be found by following this link:

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nrs/taking-part/nrs-priorities>

The priority list includes species the AWT monitors on Alderney such as sparrowhawk and fulmar and other species such as meadow pipit and greenfinch which are undergoing declines in their populations.

If you do decide to take part, you will be contributing to a very valuable dataset. Since records began the scheme has collected 1.3 million nest records from 272 species and has been instrumental in measuring the successes and failures of our breeding birds.

LEFT: SWALLOW NEST, AND THE CHICKS RECORDED LATER



How you can help

Your support ensures our monitoring and conservation work can continue. To donate please visit www.alderneywildlife.org/donations Thank you!

Alderney's Atlantic Puffins

Jack Bush - Ramsar Officer

Atlantic puffins are challenging birds to study. They not only live in remote locations but much of their time is spent underground. Alderney's puffins nest away from mammalian predators and human disturbance on the islet of Burhou, just one mile North of Alderney.

In general, puffins have high

reproductive success, with typically 60

- 80% of pairs successfully fledging a 'puffling'.

However, as is the case with almost every aspect of puffin

breeding, obtaining

an estimate of success can be a trade-off between disturbance to the adults and a sufficient number of checks to suggest successful fledging.

Burhou's remote location and the reduced population's vulnerability to disturbance present unique challenges in the assessment of productivity and population size. However, this data is essential in the assessment of how puffin populations are responding to our changing planet. Puffins breeding in the Channel Islands are almost at the most southerly extent of their breeding range. Changes monitored here could inform potential future changes in more northern populations.

MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY

On Burhou, we assess breeding success whilst removing all human disturbance

– through the use of the Puffin Cams. These three cameras, installed before the puffins make landfall, are streamed live 24/7. Puffin Cam overlooks an area of around 50 burrows that are known to have been previously occupied. As puffins are understood to return to the same burrows year on year, the area provides an ample sample size for the assessment of productivity. Remotely zooming in and panning means a powerful camera can share a unique perspective of life on a puffin colony. Comings and goings can be carefully monitored with the ability to pause, rewind, zoom in and out, and play recorded footage at different speeds. Additional surveys can be scheduled with just a few clicks.

By reviewing remotely recorded video, breeding success is measured by first noting which burrows are visited consistently during the laying period in May. A second series of counts are carried out in June and July when the chicks are hatched. This time, only burrows which puffins are observed delivering food to are counted. As puffins only lay a single egg each year, the later count provides an estimate for the number of chicks hatched in



Puffin Cam at sunrise



a sample location. For example, if 50 burrows were known to be occupied early in the breeding season and 40 burrows had reoccurring fish returns late in the season, we would assume a success of 80%. This, alongside an assessment of the total number of breeding birds present, gives an insight into the potential health of the colony.

COUNTING PUFFINS ON THE WATER

To estimate the total number of breeding birds in the colony, counts are taken for the number of birds resting on the water (rafting) below the main colony. These counts can be taken from a vessel passing by the colony or again using Puffin Cam. Early season raft counts in May suggests the total number of breeding pairs in the colony as one individual will be incubating an egg in the burrow at any one time. Later in the season in July, raft counts are taken again. Late season raft counts can assess potential future recruitment to the colony as non-breeding birds are visiting the colony which may assess the suitability of the site for when they start breeding in subsequent years.

Early season raft counts give the best representation of the true number of puffins breeding on Burhou in a given year.

'APPARENTLY OCCUPIED BURROW' SURVEYS

As only a fraction of the puffin burrows are covered by Puffin Cam, it is important to count the total number of burrows thought to have been active elsewhere on the colony. At the end of the season, shortly after the puffins have left, a team of ecologists will land on Burhou to count the total occupied



The team carrying out burrow surveys

burrows on the colony.

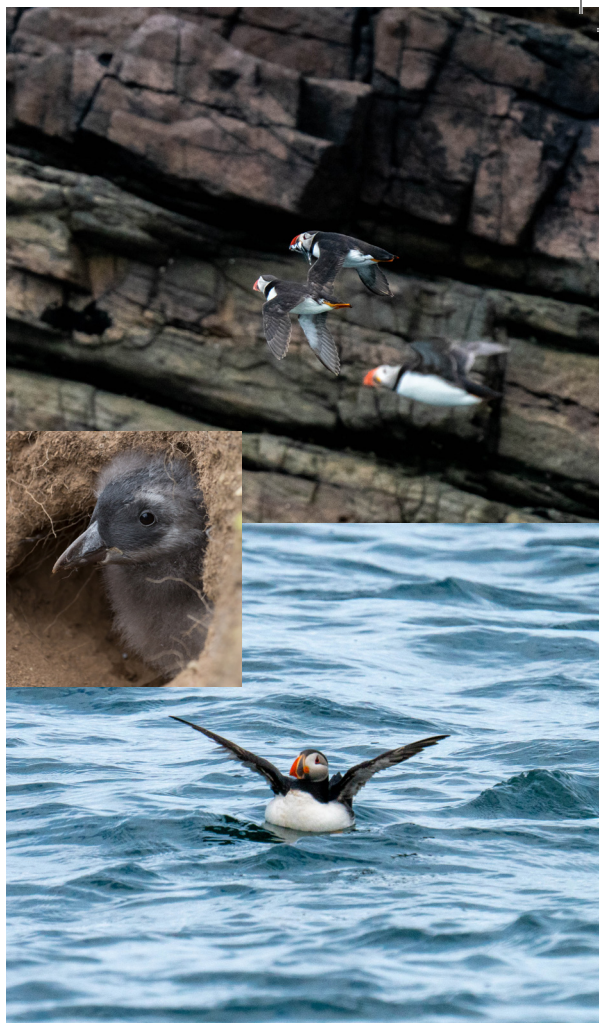
Burrow entrances are checked for signs of use, for example, the presence of feathers or fishy odours. A pasta shell is laid at the entrance to ensure each burrow is counted only once. This data confirms the total number of breeding birds and gives a further insight into population health. By combining end of season apparently occupied burrow results and early season raft counts, a reliable population level can be deduced.

We must bear in mind that the data collected is approximate. Despite this, the same methods are used each year so data for productivity and population trends is directly comparable.

Puffins, like most seabirds, are long lived, often reaching 20 years old. The population size is more affected by changes in adult survival rather than breeding success and post-fledgling survival. One year of poor breeding is unlikely to cause large declines in Burhou's puffin population; however, if this continued over a number of years an impact would be evident. This is what makes a continual data set invaluable. In reality, immature puffin survival may not be apparent until four-five years after fledging when the birds become mature and begin breeding.

Although human disturbance is kept to a minimum, Alderney's puffins are uniquely vulnerable. Changes in ocean chemistry have the potential to dramatically change food availability and oiling events at sea further threaten survival.

The future for Alderney's puffins remains uncertain; however, the AWT is confident that the puffins of Burhou are being given the best fighting chance in today's ever-changing world.



THREATS TO ALDERNEY'S PUFFINS

Over the years, the puffins of Burhou have suffered from oiling, egg-collecting, parasites, predatory, fish stealing gulls and human disturbance. The colony is now majorly protected, being closed to the public between 15th March and 1st August, with visitors being encouraged to stay away from the colony and hence not destroying burrows.

Successful Surveys

Thomas Marceau - Conservation Officer



The basis to any long-term population monitoring is a robust and consistent survey programme. Recently, the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) was approached by Dr. Miranda Bane from the University of

You've seen it on the news, heard it on the radio, and maybe even noticed the effects of it in your own garden: insects are in decline, globally. This is of course extremely concerning, especially when it comes to pollinators like bees and butterflies, which we depend upon for our food. Most crops are at least partly pollinated by animals and, despite many advances in science, we are not anywhere close to finding an alternative to the services provided by bees and their ilk.

Bristol to represent Alderney in a project which aims to form a baseline dataset of pollinators for each Channel Island. The Channel Islands are of particular interest due to their being a link between the UK and mainland Europe for many populations and, in the case of honey bees, the absence of certain bee diseases. The AWT has been working with researchers across the Channel Islands and beyond to form a comprehensive species list for Alderney. This will also provide a measuring stick for us to monitor our populations going forward. Furthermore, this project allows us to place our insect populations within the context of Europe, the British Isles and the other Channel Islands which will give us an idea of how successful our measures have been here.

Here in Alderney we've got much to be proud of in the fight against pollinator declines. One of our most long-standing projects, the Alderney Grazing Animal Project (AGAP), aims to increase floral abundance and diversity through conservation grazing. As a result, much of Longis Reserve, which covers up to 1/8th of the island's total area, can be considered a pollinator friendly area. Despite this, it can be tricky to determine the success of such a programme in the global context of plummeting insect populations. How can we confidently state that our conservation program aids pollinators when the population may be decreasing due to global factors we have no control over?



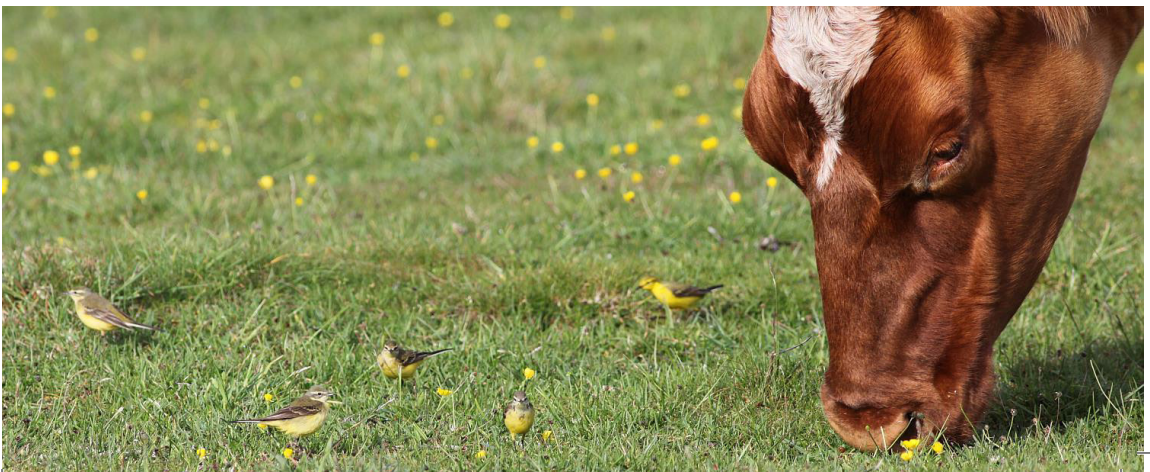
MALaise TRAPS AT ESSEX FARM FOR THE STUDY OF POLLINATOR POPULATIONS IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS / MARMALADE HOVERFLY BY RICHARD BURKMAR / BUMBLEBEE ON GLOBE THISTLE

The AWT carries out surveys on many of its sites weekly for butterflies and monthly for bees following guidance from UK organisations like the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BCT). The AWT has collected this data for several years now and has been sharing it with UK bodies where it forms part of the larger picture for insects in the British Isles. On the local scale however, we have yet to fully investigate the population trends of the pollinators that inhabit our reserves. Alderney is home to several species of importance including the Glanville fritillary, which is a Priority species in the UK. It is therefore vital that we understand how our populations are coping here.

For the most part, the data we need to better understand our insect populations does exist, as we have collected it year on year as part of our survey programme. But what would a longterm study on our pollinators look like in practice and what would it be able to tell us about these insects? It would likely focus on measuring the success of AGAP project as it relates to the presence or not of pollinators. Theory dictates that areas where conservation grazing has occurred should experience a higher diversity and abundance of plant species, which would directly correlate with visits from bees and butterflies. For example, we could contrast grazed and ungrazed plots within

our reserves, or compare the Longis reserve, where the conservation herd is based, with other locations around the island where grazing does not occur. Since we record which plants bees are seen to be foraging on during our surveys, we should be able to see which species they favour in Alderney. If the flowers bees prefer match with flora that has been found to increase in frequency since the inception of AGAP in 2003, we would be able to conclude that this project has been beneficial to these pollinators.

Linking disparate data from surveys looking at flowers, bees and butterflies is no easy task, but it is a worthwhile pursuit. A large scale floral survey of our reserves is required first, which must then be related back to the historical data we can obtain from our existing ecological work. Finding out how pollinator populations are evolving over time in Alderney is of great importance and the only true way of measuring the success of conservation programmes like AGAP. For all we know, Alderney may be leading the way for pollinators with its expansive green spaces, relative lack of manmade chemicals like pesticides, and seeming absence of certain bee diseases that are contributing to declines elsewhere in the world. If that should be the case, then we must demonstrate our successes so that others can follow suit in the struggle against the disappearance of our insects.



Botany in lockdown

Lindsay Pyne

Lockdown affected us all in many different ways and degrees of severity and life will probably never be quite the same. It did, however, also bring some pleasures and benefits and for me the thing that stands out was my ability to follow the spring flowering as it developed



whereas usually, I am busy in the office and see little of this other than the occasional visit on my day off.

The initial challenge, of course, was the 2-hour time limit. Whilst, as you will be aware if you know me, I can get from A to B pretty quickly, time spent looking for specific flora and then photographing them ate into my allowance at an alarming rate and often several visits to the same area were required. Nevertheless, I managed hundreds of records and photos which can now go into our database and, in due course, the Alderney Records Centre.

Another pleasure I found during lockdown was the 2.6 Challenge which Claire encouraged us to participate in. I decided to search for 26 (or multiples of 26) wild flowers in my garden and was pleasantly surprised at how many I found. Some I had intentionally nurtured, such as Yellow-horned Poppy and Sea Holly in my gravel patch, but others, whilst not at all rare, came as more of

a surprise. My favourite was Thyme-leaved Speedwell, not uncommon, but certainly one of the less well-known speedwells, which I found growing happily in several places in my lawn and had not noticed before!

Finally, lockdown prompted me to start a flora blog. Initially designed as a way of sharing my own pleasures with others, both on and off island, this seems to have taken on its own lease of life and here I am still doing it....

You can read Lindsay's blog at:
www.alderneywildlife.org/blog



Thyme-leaved
Speedwell

LEFT: BUMBLEBEE ON SEA HOLLY - HEIDI MORRIS

Success through Partnership

Claire Thorpe, Head of Outreach

One of the factors that determines whether a conservation project is successful or not is working well in partnership with others. This may be other NGOs, politicians, stakeholders involved in your site or local groups and clubs. On our small island it is easy to become isolated and stop thinking about the bigger picture. Making sure we stay abreast of developments in conservation knowledge and practice and seek advice from the experts working in these areas can help prevent this.

One of the most longstanding partnerships the AWT has is with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). We work with them to carry out studies on our birds, in particular Alderney's seabirds. By working with an internationally renowned organisation we can ensure the research we carry out collects the data needed to add to knowledge on these species and increases the potential for research being published. The success of the Track a Gannet project in mapping

gannet foraging behaviour is strongly linked to this partnership with the BTO and University of Liverpool.

When it comes to certain species that require specialist training to handle or monitor, linking with organisations with these skills is often the most cost-effective and efficient way to carry out a project. This is certainly the case with bats, and working with the Jersey Bat Group not only helped us find licensed individuals to assess Alderney's bat population but has also loaned us equipment that the AWT would never have afforded otherwise. Finally, when a project has had a lot of success elsewhere why try and reinvent the wheel? By linking in with the hugely engaging Pollinator Project the AWT have found new areas to research (see page 18) and can develop new ways to engage the public.



These are just a few examples of ways that partnerships can help conservation flourish on Alderney. It is also often very helpful to talk through ideas on new projects with other like-minded organisations. In my experience working with partners brings home the point that together we can do so much more.





Watch news

We have understandably had few Watch events this spring and summer, but we were very pleased to be able to manage a digital Wildlife Week in May. You can still find the videos we made for the week on the Alderney Wildlife YouTube channel! The uploads include species identification tips, information on ways to make your garden more wildlife friendly and virtual versions of some of the activities we would usually run like rockpooling and kayaking.

Throughout June the Wildlife Trusts ran 30 Days Wild, again with more of a digital slant for 2020. We were so pleased to see lots of Alderney children getting involved, you can see some of the things the children in year 5 and 6 at St Anne's School got up to in the photos below and we have also included this brilliant poem by Grace Milan. Young people are so much more aware of the threats to the environment than ever before, and we hope the AWT Watch group has played a part in raising this awareness.

Our other big event of the year, the Alderney fayre and wildlife weekend over the August bank holiday will be a smaller affair this year. Rather than the marquee at Essex we will be based around Braye common on the Sunday with other terrestrial and marine events on Saturday and Monday.



WHAT ABOUT THEM? BY GRACE MILLAN

The monkeys, the pumas, they all live among trees

The Amazon the rainforest, nice places are these

The one destroyer comes and other ones follow

They wreck all the trees, their hearts so hollow

They rumble around in their scary machines

Rolling over our land, taking away our green

The trees sway and shake as we scramble in fear

Their scary machines coming ever so near

With smiles on their faces, greed overwhelming

From the trees they cut down and the money they're gaining

The animals need to live their lives, homes they're awaiting

So let's reduce the resources the people are wasting

We are very pleased that the Sark Watch group is restarting under the leadership of Dr Nicholas Roberts, headteacher of the Sark School. Nicholas joined the school early this year and is very keen to restart the group, we look forward to bringing you updates on their nature-based activities soon!



Visiting a UK reserve



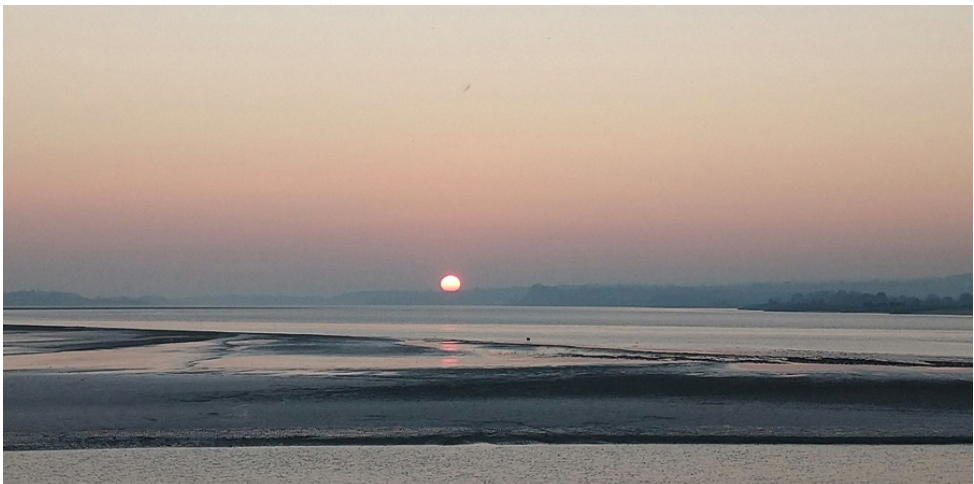
Connor Stapleton Goddard - Conservation Officer 2019

When I left Alderney, I had imagined that my days of living next to and working in a Ramsar Site were behind me. However, having returned to rural Gloucestershire I had, in fact, unknowingly been living next to a 16,900 ha Ramsar Site for the past 14 years. The River Severn, famous for its tidal bore wave, has the second largest tidal range of any river in the world. Consequently, twice a day huge areas of sand banks, mudflats and wetland are exposed and used by a huge range of wetland birds, and in prodigious numbers. Many of these species, such as oystercatchers, ringed plover and curlew are also found in the West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site in Alderney, not to mention the bird and invertebrate species found in the extensive reedbeds along the banks of the Severn you might also catch a glimpse of at the Longis pond.



I am also fortunate enough to live within sight of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust headquarters at Slimbridge, an internationally recognised breeding centre for rare wetland birds and a nationally important wetland site for resident and migratory species. As such many nationally rare species such as the tundra swan are found here in high numbers, not to mention the 35,000 wintering wildfowl which literally flock to the area to take advantage of the relatively predator-free wetlands and rich, diverse habitat.

Our very mild winter and very warm spring here in Gloucestershire has led to increased numbers of wetland birds on the river and for the first time I was able to hear the characteristic call of oystercatchers from my bedroom window. Hearing their calls will always take me back to being woken up most days in Alderney by the oystercatchers foraging in Longis bay, which is a pleasant sound I am not likely to be able to sleep through again.





Get in touch

We would love to hear your
thoughts, questions and ideas

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