

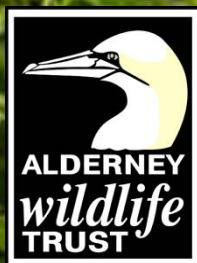
# Alderney Wildlife

## **ALDERNEY'S A BUZZING PLACE TO BEE**

Learn what you can do to support  
the VIPs of the insect world.

## **PLOVERS IN PERIL**

Alderney's Plover population trends  
towards local extinction.



**Summer 2021 | Tracking change**

Protecting Alderney's wildlife for  
the future.

04



BRAYE | AWT

06



AWT STAFF | LORNA WEST

10



CARDER BEE | LORNA WEST

18



RINGED PLOVER | JOSHUA COPPING

22



18 PLAYGROUP | LORNA WEST

20



GREY SEALS AT BURHOU | JACK BUSH

MANNEZ POND | AWT

## Editorial My Wild Summer



Alderney in the summer sunshine is a place of magic. It's a landscape brimming with colour and life. A wild paradise.

Several times, I've been taken aback by the staggering number of butterflies I've encountered on my morning runs. Clouds of them. Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Common Blues filling the air with various shades of oranges, reds and blues. I often stop and marvel at the sight of them.

I've been amazed at the hub of activity below the still turquoise surface of Longis Bay. Rainbow coloured wrasse darting in and out between thick thongs of seaweed, vibrant communities of crabs, anemones and starfish coalescing on rocks, and shoals

of small fish sheltering amongst beds of kelp and eelgrass.

The flora displays across the island have been my personal favourite, Braye Common in particular. Its transition from a vast sea of Buttercups and Daisies to a mix of Orchids, Broomrapes, Clovers, Trefoils and other colourful pea flowers such as Restharrow and Lucerne was beautiful. It became wild. Full of pinks, purples and yellows and alive with the hum of bees.

Summer is also one of our busiest survey times. We carry out regular butterfly, bumblebee, dragonfly, moth, seal, crab and seabird surveys. These surveys help us to assess the health of the island's ecosystems. We can track changes in the abundance and presence of species over time, helping us to identify how species are being impacted by threats such as climate change, pollution and land-use change. In this

issue, we focus on some of the Trust's key surveys, exploring their importance and what trends they have revealed so far.

By Lorna West, Outreach Officer

## Contents

### 04 Manager's Report

Our CEO, Roland Gauvain, shares his views on this year's survey work and discusses what the outcomes might mean for Alderney's wildlife.

### 06 Wild News

It's been a busy summer for the Trust; from winning this year's Conservation Awards to the relaunch of Sula Braye, we've got lots of exciting news to share!

### 10 Alderney's a Buzzing place to Bee

Alderney is home to six species of bumblebee, learn why they are important and what you can do to support them.

### 12 Revealing Alderney's Nocturnal Wonders

The Channel Island's biggest ever bat survey reveals some exciting and unexpected results for Alderney.

### 16 Sea Search

Pink Sea Fans, colourful nudibranchs and Jewel Anemones are just some of the species surveyed in Alderney's waters this year.

### 18 Plovers In Peril

Could Alderney's Plovers be wading to local extinction?

### 20 Seal Survey

A win for nature; record numbers of Grey Seals have spotted around Alderney's coast this year.

### 22 WATCH

### 23 UK Reserve

Visiting London soon? Take a trip to Walthamstow Wetlands reserve.



# Manager's Report

## Tracking changes



The summer has had its ups and downs. From the struggles faced by Alderney's Ringed Plovers, to the signs of new auk nesting sites due to rodent control, there has been much to discover about our small island's ecosystems.

At the same time the AWT team has been very stretched trying to meet the demand of visitors and residents alike wanting to experience what the island can offer with our regular activities attracting record numbers.

So whilst we see an ever growing interest in Alderney's wildlife, we are faced with the need to respond to growing signs of the stresses it faces.

For every new species of moth, bird or plant recorded we see increasing threats from invasive species, loss of habitat from abandonment or impacts such as plastics.

The volunteer team at the AWT has achieved huge steps forward in wildlife recording this year and the conservation effort has kept pace. This winter the Alderney Biodiversity Centre will be one of our main focuses. We hope this database will enable our members to follow our work more closely.

Our achievements are only made possible by those volunteers who give up thousands of hours of their time to record and take action. So please join me in thanking them for their efforts – and, if you have the time, please consider joining the team in our battle to put Alderney's nature into recovery!

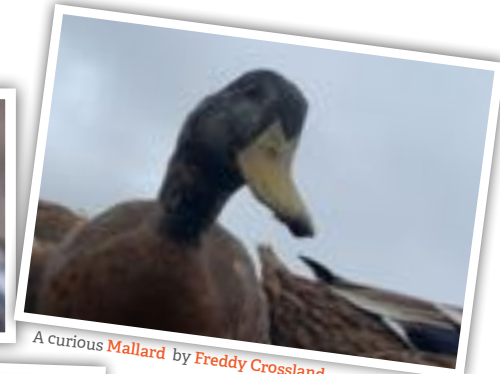
By Roland Gauvain



Alderney's wildlife never fails to amaze. Here are some of our favourite wildlife snaps taken over the summer.



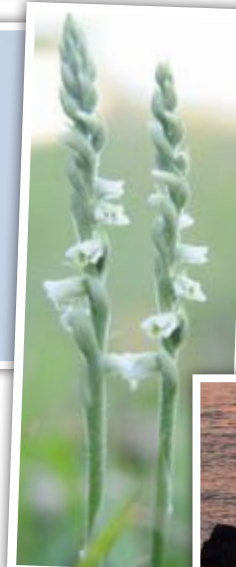
A **Slow Worm** basking in the sun by **Chris Rees**



A curious **Mallard** by **Freddy Crossland**



**Swallow** fluttering in the air **Bill Black**.



**Autumn Lady's-tresses** by **Lou Collings**



An **Elephant Hawk** takes a drink by **David Wedd**



Gulls at sunset by **Sandy Robertson**

If you would like to feature in our next edition of Alderney Wildlife, please email your pictures to [Headofoutreach@alderneywildlife.org](mailto:Headofoutreach@alderneywildlife.org) or tag Alderney Wildlife Trust on social media.



# WILD NEWS

All the latest news from Alderney Wildlife Trust

## Assessing the environmental impacts of Covid-19



The AWT are excited to be part of an exciting new research project aimed at assessing the indirect impacts of the Covid-19 virus on the environment. Set up by Surfers Against Sewage, National Geographic and Plymouth University, this six-month-long project involves taking regular samples of the litter found along a 200-metre stretch of a beach, in our case Longis Bay. The data collected will be used to produce a peer-reviewed scientific paper, alongside a report of findings that will help to identify changes in plastic use, and motivate and

activate solutions at both community and policy levels.

The AWT is one of 100 other 'super volunteers' across the British Isles selected to be involved in this exciting project. With the pandemic leading to a rise in the use of single-use plastic and personal protective equipment (PPE), it will be interesting to see how our data compares to other areas in the UK, particularly as Alderney has managed to remain relatively Covid-free for most of the pandemic.

## AWT wins Best Education Project

Our project, 'Exploring Our Seas', won this year's 'Best Education Project' at the Insurance Corporation Channel Islands' Conservation Awards!

Our project aims to inspire and empower Alderney's children to champion and bring about positive change for our marine environment!!

We want them to experience marine life up close, recognise the beauty of our coast and learn about why it needs protecting.

We are working closely with St. Anne's School to deliver this vision and ensure every child gets the opportunity to explore Alderney's seas by boat!!



## Marsh Volunteer Award for Marine Conservation

Earlier in the year, the Marsh Trust in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts requested local Trusts to nominate a volunteer for the Marsh Volunteer Award for Marine Conservation. The award is for volunteers who have made an outstanding contribution to marine conservation and who has furthered marine based work in their area. We nominated Justin in secret and un-surprisingly he won! In addition to Justin volunteering as the AWT's avian expert, Justin significantly contributes to the Trust's Alderney Living Seas Programme. Justin has enhanced our knowledge of the island's Grey Seal population, including helping identify specific individuals for our Grey Seal photographic identification catalogue. Justin has also begun increasing our

records of subtidal marine species and habitats, which are extremely limited for Alderney (through Seasearch surveys). As such, Justin has identified several locally important marine habitats, Pink Sea Fan stands, sea anemones and sea slugs not previously recorded within Alderney's territorial waters. Our knowledge of the island's marine species and habitats would, in part, be unknown without Justin. We are indebted to him for all his help and are thrilled that he has recognised for his work with this award. During August, the Marsh Trust and TWT held a special awards ceremony (via Zoom) with the other wildlife trust branches where we could all congratulate Justin and also 4 other winners.



## Fountain for change!

Alderney recently won funding from the Coastal Fountain Fund hosted by "Sea-Changers" a UK based marine conservation charity!!! The funds have enabled us to install an outdoor water bottle filling station at Longis Bay car park, adjacent to the Roman Fort.

The application was submitted jointly by the Alderney Wildlife Trust and the States of Alderney and delivered free of charge by Alderney Shipping!

We hope that this fund will help islanders and visitors to reduce their use of single-use plastic water bottles, keeping our beaches beautiful and protecting our wildlife!





# WILD NEWS

## REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Rising carbon dioxide levels are warming our atmosphere. A special report produced by The IPCC showed that a rise of just 1.5°C could cause irreversible impacts; the loss of ecosystems and the extinction of species.

In response to this threat, the AWT, together with other Wildlife Trusts across the UK, has produced its first Carbon Reduction Strategy to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve net-zero by 2030.

The AWT produced 26.74 tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2019. As reported by most Wildlife Trusts, livestock made up a significant proportion (29.2%) of the Trust's carbon emissions during this period. However, these figures are likely to be overestimated. Factors used to calculate livestock emissions do not consider the ecological benefits that conservation grazing offers. Research in this area is developing rapidly; the central Wildlife Trust team is setting up a working group

to produce a more appropriate livestock calculation tool, to which the AWT will subscribe. As expected, the AWT's vessel 'Sula of Braye' was the second most polluting Trust activity and the Trust's most polluting vehicle (4.862 t CO<sub>2</sub>e; 18.2% of the Trust's total carbon emissions). This was closely followed by the emissions produced from electricity use across the Trust's rented properties (766 t CO<sub>2</sub>e; 17.8%).

By examining key areas of carbon output, the Trust has identified the activities that need to be modified to reduce carbon usage. After discussions with Alderney Electricity, actions the Trust will work on in 2021/22 include: installing a solar array at Essex Farm, reducing our reliance on diesel vehicles by increasing the e-bike fleet, and introducing a formal energy-saving policy for all staff members.

The Trust will continue to review its carbon usage, producing annual action plans in order to meet the net-zero target by 2030.

BACKGROUND: LONGIS COMMON | LORNA WEST



## Wildlife Fayre 2021

The Alderney Wildlife Trust hosted its 18th annual Wildlife Fayre at Essex Farm on the August Bank Holiday Sunday.



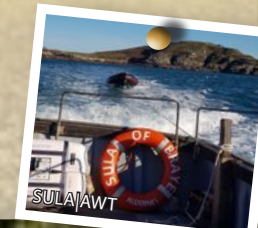
The day was a huge success with hundreds of islanders and visitors turning up to support the event. Live music, great food and drink, and the sunny weather made for festival-like vibes.

Thanks to everyone who got involved; volunteers, stallholders, and those who participated in our tug of war and sack races!

Funds raised will go towards supporting the conservation work carried out by the AWT, helping to put nature into recovery!

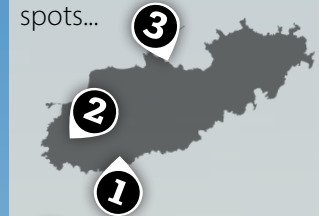
## Sula Returns

As some of you will have seen first-hand as you hopped on board, our hardy workboat 'Sula' had a major mechanical refit over the last winter. She's now a much more capable, sustainable and financially viable vessel and we're proud to have welcomed over 500 guests on-board this year alongside an ever expanding survey programme. With an electrical refit planned in the coming weeks, we're excited for Sula's future, only made possible through the continued donation of fund, time and expertise across the board. If you feel like you can support this project, please get in touch.



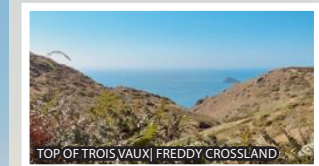
### WILD HIGHLIGHTS

Alderney's top summer spots...



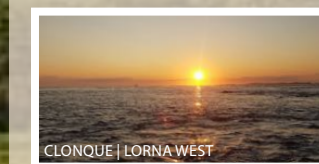
#### 1 Trois Vaux

This valley is one of the most secluded parts of the island. In summer the cliffs turn purple with heather and become a hot spot for bees and butterflies. It offers great views of Les Etacs.



#### 2 Clonque Bay

Best place to watch summer sunsets. You can listen to Osytercatchers calling whilst the sun disappears behind Burhou.



#### 3 Braye Harbour

The sheltered water's of Braye make it one of the best places on the island to go for a snorkel. Discover Eelgrass, rainbow-coloured wrasse and giant spider crabs.





# Alderney's a Buzzing place to Bee!

BACKGROUND: QUEEN BUFFTAIL BUMBLEBEE | LORNA WEST

Bumblebees are my favourite insect. Their fuzzy-buzzy nature makes them cute as well as exceptional pollinators, particularly when it comes to pollinating some of my favourite fruit and veg such as tomatoes, strawberries and potatoes. These flowers only release pollen when vibrated at certain frequencies, meaning access is limited to the lucky few. Bumblebees are one of these VIPs (Very Important Pollinators), accessing the pollen through buzz pollination. A technique whereby the bee bites onto the flower, places its body close to the anther and then beats its wings 200 times per second. Pollen shakes free from the anther, covering the bee in a

thick yellow blanket of pollen; happy bee, happy plant!

The role bumblebees play in pollinating wild flora and crops is crucial but unfortunately, science is telling us that the bees, as well as other VIPs, are in trouble... this is not surprising when you consider that since the 1940s the British Isles has lost 97% of its flower-rich grasslands. With their food and home gone, they go too, and habitat loss isn't even their only threat. Disease, invasive species, pesticide use and climate change combine to place an unprecedented amount of pressure on our small buzzing friends... Over a third of bumblebee

*Did you know?*  
It is estimated that 84% of all crops and 80% of wild flowers depend on insects for pollination.

species in the British Isles have now declined by 70%, with two species going extinct in the last 80 years.

While bumblebees are important ecologically and commercially, they also have value in their 'bee-ing'. They bring joy to many people through their clumsy lazy flight, cartoonishly oversized bodies and gentle nature. Bumblebees are loved so much that they often appear on our clothing, hats, bags, mugs and jewellery. They are a flagship species for conservation, particularly for invertebrates which are often overlooked or considered gross or scary. One of my favourite quotes is from the famous entomologist E.O Wilson, "If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos." Insects may be small but they help keep the world running- we need them more than they need us.

On Alderney, we do not know if our bumblebee populations are following a similar trend to the rest of the British Isles, having only begun monitoring their populations through 'bee walks' in 2017. A bee walk is essentially a standard-

## Three Bumblebees to spot on Alderney:

### Jersey White-tail

*Bombus terrestris ssp. terrestris*



JERSEY WHITE-TAIL | LORNA WEST

The Continental and Channel Islands form of the Buff-tailed Bumblebee. All castes have pure white tails and a yellow stripe on thorax and abdomen. Females are very similar to *Bombus lucorum* (White-tailed bumblebee) which we don't think we have here.

### Red-tailed Bumblebee

*Bombus lapidarius*

A common sight across Alderney. Queens and workers are jet-black, with a bright red tail covering up to 50% of the abdomen. Males have yellow facial hair and bright yellow bands at the front and rear of the thorax, along with a similar red tail to females (though this fades quickly in sunlight and can appear yellow or even white in worn specimens).



RED-TAILED BUMBLEBEE | LORNA WEST

### Jersey Carder Bee

*Bombus pascuorum ssp. flavidus*



JERSEY CARDER BEE | AWI

Males, workers and queens all look similar in appearance, very gingerly-brown hair all over, almost no dark hairs on the abdomen and no clearly-defined tail. Can look similar to other Carder Bees which may not be present on Alderney.

JERSEY WHITE-TAIL | LORNA WEST



bumblebee-monitoring scheme that involves volunteer 'BeeWalkers' walking the same fixed route (transect) once a month between March and October, counting the bumblebees seen and identifying them to species and caste (queen, worker, male).

Over time we will then be able to see trends in our bumblebee populations, for example, this year because of the uncharacteristically chilly spring, we might expect to see fewer bumblebees around for the month of April compared to last year. Long-term monitoring will help us to assess how bumblebee populations change through time, detect early warning signs of population declines and track their response to land use and climate change and, ultimately, inform us of how to manage our natural environment.

Since 2017 we have recorded six species



of bumblebees on Alderney (three of which are shown on the previous page). We believe we have two sub-species the Jersey Carder Bee, a subspecies to the Common Carder and the Jersey White-tail, a subspecies to the Buff-tailed bumblebee. These as-

Interested in becoming a 'BeeWalker'? Please get in touch with our Ecologist, via [Ecologist@alderneywildlife.org](mailto:Ecologist@alderneywildlife.org)



sumptions are based on data collected by the Guernsey Biological Record Centre in 2016. So while we believe we do not have other Carders or the White-tailed bumblebees (which look very similar to *Bombus terrestris*), we cannot be sure without genetic testing. To remedy this, we've teamed up with the Pollinator Project and Bristol University to assist with a study that aims to identify the number of Buff-tailed Bumblebee colonies Alderney currently supports. To achieve this, we will be taking genetic samples of our island bumblebees and in the process hope to clarify exactly what species we have here.

So as you can see, we still have a lot to learn about Alderney's bumblebees and they are just one type of bee! In the UK there are over 250 species of solitary bee, but as it stands, we have yet to learn what species exist here. The same issue exists with other invertebrates including hoverflies, beetles, spiders and flies. Due to the huge diversity and difficulty in identification, these groups of invertebrates require expert entomologists to verify their presence on Alderney.

That is why, projects such as the Alderney Biological Records Centre, which asks the public to submit photos of their wildlife sightings are so valuable in providing this information. With a good photo, experts can begin to compile a list of invertebrates that our small island supports. This information acts as a baseline for future comparison, helping us to monitor the health of our islands ecosystems.

Help us save the bees by recording

what you see! Head to [www.alderneybiodiversitycentre.org/](http://www.alderneybiodiversitycentre.org/) or use the iReord App!

By Lorna West

## Six tips for welcoming bees into your garden



### Plant nectar and pollen-rich flowers.

Have a look at the RHS Perfect for Pollinators lists for inspiration: [rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators](http://rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators)

### Create and protect potential nesting sites.

Check out the activity sheet on page 22.

### Provide both long and short grass.

Both serve as potential nesting sites for different species of bee.

### Encourage natural predators.

Try to avoid chemicals like pesticides or fungicides in your garden. Instead, encourage natural predators. Log piles are great for beetles, as are compost bins, which also take care of your food waste!

### Provide a water source. Bees need a drink too.

Can you create a wildlife pond? Or alternatively, how about a pot sunk into the ground or a bird bath containing a few submerged rocks to enable bees to reach the water?

### Help out a tired bumblebee.

If you see a bumblebee on the ground it's likely to be tired and in need of food. You can help by mixing sugar with water, placing on a teaspoon and leaving it in front of the bee. Once it's eaten its fill, it will 'bee' on its way.

For more tips and tricks heads to <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/gardeningadvice/>





# Revealing Aldemey's NOCTURNAL WONDERS



After a long days walk around Alderney you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd seen its most interesting Wildlife. Thousands of Gannets, a pair of Peregrine Falcons, half a dozen Glanville Fritillary and a bed of Small-flowered Catchfly is a great day for most wildlife enthusiasts! Yet many of Alderney's most interesting creatures are waiting for darkness to fall before they venture out. Most people know about Alderney's iconic 'blonde' hedgehogs but witnessing the aerial ability of Alderney's bat species is a true natural wonder which many of us may never notice. Alderney has at least 9 bat species present, in an area of just 3 square miles, this is quite remarkable. Nonetheless, our understanding of the island's bat diversity is only now beginning to be truly appreciated.

Until recently the bats of the Bailiwick of Guernsey have been understudied when compared to their avian counterparts. The Bailiwick Bat survey is

changing this. This four-year citizen science project is the brainchild of the British Trust of Ornithology in collaboration with the States of Guernsey, La Societe, Guernsey Biological Records Centre and the Alderney Wildlife Trust. The project has utilised the improvement in acoustic monitoring technology and machine learning to allow for the survey of large areas at a fraction of the time and cost that they would have taken just 5 years ago. To gain a better understanding of which bat species are present and where they are found, the Bailiwick has been divided up into 500m grid squares. These squares are booked by volunteers along with passive bat detectors to record the bat calls of local species. Once the survey has been completed the recordings are uploaded to the BTO's acoustic pipeline. This amazing piece of software utilises machine learning to auto-identify the recordings to species level. Unusual findings are then checked by experts, saving huge amounts of time, where previously thousands of recordings would be manually checked for every survey.

Here on Alderney, local engagement in the survey has been fantastic. Twenty-one people have been involved, resulting in almost complete survey coverage of the island.

By Jack Harper



COMMON PIPISTRELLE: LAURIE CAMPBELL/NATUREPL.COM

## Aldemey's 9

- Leisler's Serotine
- Brown Long-eared
- Grey Long-eared
- Natterer's
- Common Pipistrelle,
- Nathusius Pipistrelle,
- Soprano
- Kuhl's Pipistrelle



## OUR TIPS FOR BATWATCHING



### Use a bat detector

The easiest way to find and identify bats is with the help of a bat detector. This device picks up the high-pitched echolocation calls of bats and makes them audible to humans. Different species echolocate at different frequencies, so we can work out which bat we're hearing.

Bat detectors come in a range of prices and complexities and may take a bit of practice to use.

### Wait by water

Just like other animals, bats need to drink, so they're often found around waterways. Stretches of sheltered, still or slow-moving water also attract clouds of insects that they can hunt. You may even see bats hunting low across the water at Ladysmith and Bonne Terre.



### Arrive before sunset

Bats are easiest to spot around dusk, when they emerge to feed and there's still enough light to see them. St Anne's Churchyard or the Community Woodland are great places to watch them emerge, sometimes before the sun has set. Children and some adults can often hear these without a detector!



### Study the flight

Bats have different flight patterns, which can give you an idea of the species you're watching. Pipistrelles fly erratically, noctules have a direct flight with sudden swoops, and brown long-eared bats have a slow, hovering flight.





# SEA SEARCH



CRATER & GOOSE-BUMP SPONGES | JUSTIN HART



PINK SEA FAN | JUSTIN HART



FAVORINUS BRANCHIALIS | JUSTIN HART



BLUE-RAYED LIMPET | JUSTIN HART



LOBSTER | JUSTIN HART



ORANGE-CLUBBED SEA SLUG | JUSTIN HART

Seasearch is a seabed surveying project for recreational (but also a few professional) sea divers throughout Britain and Ireland. Through accurate observations of the seabed, it aims to build a valuable record of the various underwater habitats and marine life present around our coastline.

With this growing baseline of knowledge gathered into a national database it has become possible to identify which seabed types are most widespread, where there are unusual or important underwater features, and which marine species are the most common or rare. Records of frequently visited sites also help to identify where changes are occurring. This information is vital in providing a framework for management decisions and conservation activities to protect and enhance our marine environment.

Originally set up in 1987 by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the then

Nature Conservancy Council (a former UK government agency), Seasearch is a successful citizen science project that harnesses the enthusiasm and knowledge of a growing number of recreational divers and snorkellers.

Run by the MCS on behalf of the JNCC it initially contributed to the national Marine Nature Conservation Review. Seasearch survey effort through the 1990s, led to the identification of several 'Marine sites of Nature Conservation Importance' in Sussex. - the first time this designation was assigned to marine sites. Then, following its relaunch in 2003 with new forms and training materials, a network of local coordinators throughout Britain and Ireland form a hub for regional data gathering. Courses and diving (or snorkelling) events are listed on the Seasearch website ([www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk)) and many Seasearch survey events occur throughout the diving season.

A huge amount of data has been collected and a large number of reports are available to download from the Seasearch website. Seasearch data can also be accessed online through the National Biodiversity Network website ([www.nbn.org.uk](http://www.nbn.org.uk)). Seasearch data has helped a wide range of marine conservation issues, included the identification of sites for added protection as Special Areas of Conservation, Marine Protected Areas and Marine Conservation Zones.

However, information about our seabed is far from complete and there remain many stretches of the British and Irish coastlines undived or infrequently so. Some of these under-recorded sites occur here in the Channel Islands and notably around Alderney.

Data from around Alderney may be especially useful too, particularly for identifying change, such as those caused by our activities and climate change. This

is because Alderney lies at the northern edge of a biogeographical zone (the Lusitanian-Boreal region) that occurs nowhere else in the British Isles other than the Channel Islands. Therefore, as the seas around us warm it could be an important place in the British Isles to detect changes in species distribution and abundance. But to detect these changes we must first know what already exists and establish a baseline of data. The AWT's program of marine surveys, including its contribution to Seasearch, aims to fulfil this role, and in so doing, help provide that vital information needed to carry out effective management decisions and conservation activities to protect and enhance our marine environment for the future. If you are a diver or snorkeller and want to get involved you can contact our local Seasearch coordinator, Dr. Mel Broadhurst, based here at the AWT, by emailing [marine@alderneywildlife.org](mailto:marine@alderneywildlife.org)



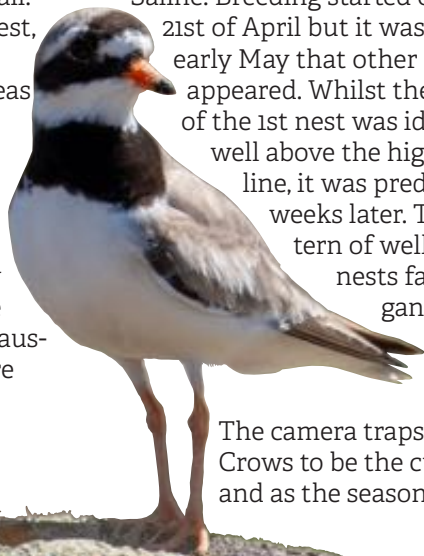


# Plovers In Peril

RINGED PLOVER | JOSHUA COPPING

On Alderney, we are lucky to have some of the most unspoilt natural beauty in the Bailiwick and picture- postcard beaches. If you were to take a closer look at these white sandy beaches, you'd probably spy a Ringed Plover pattering around on the sand. True to their nature, the bird will have seen you a while beforehand. They are the avian equivalent of a lifeguard, continuously scanning the beach for any signs of danger. As the only place in The Channel Islands where they regularly nest, I think we should also consider these birds part of the unique fabric of the island.

The chances of ever seeing the plover's clutch of 4 chalk blue speckled eggs amongst the sand and pebbles is small. Relying on camouflage to hide the nest, a pair of plovers will choose any site above the high tide line although areas mixed with sand, stones and sometimes even grass are favoured. This choice of location, unfortunately, brings them into conflict with humans and dogs. During the last few months, we have been studying how the plovers react to people alongside using camera traps to examine the causes of nest failure and the results were quite revealing.



RINGED PLOVER | JOSHUA COPPING

When reviewing the images, we could calculate how long each bird was able to incubate a clutch for on nests with both high and low disturbance. The incubation is shared, with each stint usually lasting between 1 to 1 ½ hours. However, when a pair experienced frequent disruptions during this period the timing of these changeovers became more irregular. At some sites, birds were only able to tend their eggs for 10 to 20 minutes which made them more vulnerable to predation and chilling.

This year we had 5 pairs breeding around the island, with 1 at Saye and 4 between Clonque and Platte Saline. Breeding started on the 21st of April but it wasn't until early May that other nests appeared. Whilst the location of the 1st nest was ideal being well above the high tide line, it was predated 3 weeks later. This pattern of well-placed nests failing began to repeat across other sites.

The camera traps revealed Crows to be the culprit and as the season unfold-



RINGED PLOVER NESTS | DANIEL WHITELEGG

ed, more nests were predated at the egg stage. Additionally, strong SW winds in late May covered a nest at Saye in sand only 3 days before the chicks were due to hatch, despite the best efforts of the male to keep digging them out. This highlights the multitude of pressure these birds face when breeding. It wasn't until the 11th of June that we saw the 1st chicks, from a nest on Platte Saline. Out of all the nests this one was least disturbed and so the parents were able to incubate the eggs properly. Amazingly, all 4 of these chicks fledged, which is a testament to the pairs excellent parental care. Out of all the following nesting attempts, only 2 pairs were successful in even hatching out chicks. A pair at Clonque managed to fledge a chick from a clutch of 2 (the other chick being predated by a crow shortly after hatching) and the Saye pair, at the 3rd attempt hatched 3 chicks from 4 eggs. These were predated by a Crow on 21st July bringing an end to the season.

Overall, 2021's 5 fledged young represent the 3rd best year for

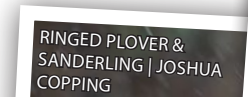


productivity (6 chicks fledged in 2018 and 2019) since detailed recording began. This is still a poor return from 37 eggs and the population remains stable but in a vulnerable position. There is a real chance to see humans and plovers coexist on our beaches and we are actively working on ways to secure the long-term future for these birds, including cordoned off areas and appropriately placed signs which we hope to implement next year.

By Daniel Whitelegg



JUVENILE RINGED PLOVER | JOSHUA COPPING



RINGED PLOVER & SANDERLING | JOSHUA COPPING





# Burhou's Seals

Efficient, highly mobile swimmers capable of deep, long dives, Grey Seals aren't an uncommon sight around our coastline. Despite this, many islanders are surprised to learn that Alderney's waters support a population of over thirty seals, exploiting our high energy coastal waters which provide ample foraging opportunities as well as important haul out and resting sites on the rocky reefs to the North of Burhou.

Alderney's waters are unquestionably an important area for Grey Seals. Although around thirty individuals may be 'residents' to our island, a much higher number of transient individuals visit for variable periods of time. The fast-flowing tides cascading around our rocky underwater landscape are home to numerous fish species, an easy meal for a visiting hungry Grey Seal. It is thanks to boat-based survey work that the tendencies of these large predators are being uncovered.

Grey seal monitoring across the Channel Islands and adjacent French coastline has been coordinated by the French 'Groupe Mammalogique Normand' since 2019 where survey dates are assigned to correspond with the lowest spring tides when it can be assumed that the maximum number of seals will be hauled out on the rocky islets exposed at low tide. Undertaking each survey at the same time ensures a representative snapshot of seals in the region is captured at a single point in time. The surveys themselves are undertaken by groups across the Channel Islands and in Alderney's waters by the AWT.

Each survey records the numbers of males, females, and pups in the population. Monthly surveys over 2021 have seen population totals



A Grey Seal saluting | Jack Bush



Grey Seal underwater | Alexander Mustard/2020VISION



A couple of Grey Seals chilling on the rocks | Jack Bush

Remember to keep your distance  
when watching seals..#UseYourZoom  
#PutSealsFirst



Grey Seal colony of Burhou | Jack Bush

from 31 to 69 Grey Seals with some heavily pregnant females in recent surveys. Interestingly, until 2019, the maximum population recorded was just 23, just a third of the maximum recorded in the same period in 2021.

The increase in seals surveyed in our waters in recent years highlights the importance of our coastal waters. Although pupping hasn't been confirmed, it is clear from the greater number of seals during the summer fattening season that our waters are important for foraging and resting, if only for transient individuals. Increased numbers during this time may also suggest that they are being displaced from other local haul-out sites due to lack of food or from human disturbance.

Surveys are always accompanied by taking high-definition images of each seal for the collation of photographic-identification libraries. Just like our fingerprints, the patterning of a seal's fur is unique to the individual making identification viable in many cases.

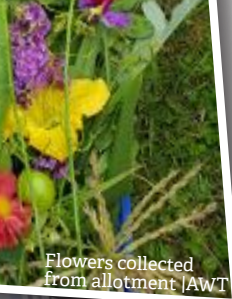
Identifying seals allows us to dig into the life histories of this curious predator, evaluating which areas are important for which individuals, where our seals are going, and how long they may be staying at one place. Individuals can be identified that have previously been seen in our waters and further afield, even as far as the South Coast of England.

In a survey taken in June of this year, we were excited to see one Grey Seal hauled out behind Burhou that we had seen earlier this year, one that had hauled out on one of our beaches during a period of poor weather, and in poor condition. It's great to see that this seal is doing well after a short, undisturbed period on our shoreline. We have also recently surveyed a seal wearing a red plastic tag, likely from a rehabilitation programme in Northern Germany.

There remains no legal protection for seals in Alderney's waters.

By Jack Bush





# Watch



SUMMER has been a busy time for the Watch group. We've hunted for bumblebees and butterflies, created beautiful artwork from natural and recycled materials and searched Alderney's rock pools for crabs, anemones and starfish.

St Anne's students have also been busy designing posters to raise awareness of the environmental impact of wet wipes. These wet wipes are being flushed down the toilet, blocking the sewage system at Longis and entering the ocean. Here, they break down into microscopic plastic fibres and are eaten by fish, harming wildlife. The message from the students is clear; think before you flush.

This October AWT will be supporting the Great Global Nurdle Hunt, followed by Woodland Week and a SWISH event in November. For more information on these events follow us on social media or check our website: [www.alderneywildlife.org/events](http://www.alderneywildlife.org/events)



## How to build a bumblebee nest



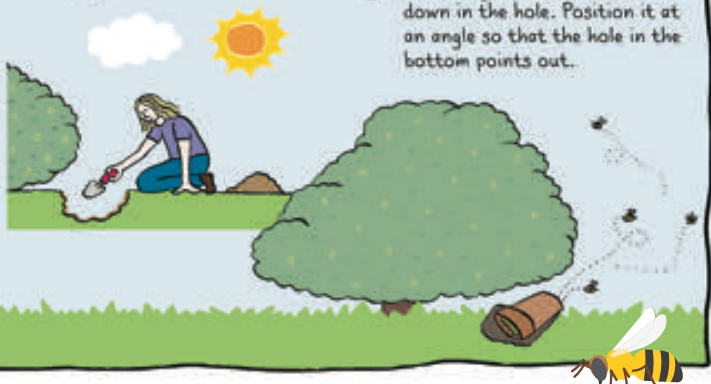
### You will need:

- terracotta flower pot
- trowel
- dry grass or moss
- sheltered spot that gets some sun

1 Dig a small, shallow hole under a bush. Your chosen site should not get too hot or too cold, and be in sun for about half of the day.

2 Fill the flowerpot with dry grass and/or moss.

3 Half-bury the flowerpot upside down in the hole. Position it at an angle so that the hole in the bottom points out.



# Visiting a UK reserve

As greenspaces in London go, Walthamstow Wetlands is up there as one of the best. Growing up in NE London, I've had the fortune to get to know this man-made nature magnet very intimately. It was always there as a remote pocket of tranquillity amongst the bustle of urban life that almost completely engulfs it. Since a transformation in 2017 it is now one of the capital's most visited nature reserves.

Pre Victorians, it was just another segment of floodplain of the River Lea which runs from Hertford to the Millennium Dome by The Thames. A demand for clean drinking water to supply the growing population led to the creation of eventually 10 reservoirs. It is these mostly artificial monoliths that now support so much of the biodiversity from Otters to Spoonbills.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the amazing variety of bird life that it is best known for. With waterbodies of varying profiles there is a food source for virtually all wildfowl, with winter being the best time to see Goldeneye, Scaup and Goosander amongst the commoner ducks. As the daylight hours lengthen birds such as Wheatear and Sand Martin catapult the reserve into spring. Being part of a river valley and surrounded by urban sprawl, birds are channelled through here and stop over as part of their journey. This creates a migration bottleneck which is most apparent in spring. On any given day you can see

anything from the iconic Red Kite to Arctic Terns as they head up the polar climes. Even rarities like Ring Ouzel and Little Gull turn up every year so you really never know what is around the corner.

My favourite time on the reserve comes in summer when the Swifts have returned from Mozambique. Due to the large open bodies of water, flying insects can be at a premium around the time they emerge. This creates a scene that could easily be straight out of a David Attenborough documentary, where in excess of 3,000 bird's melee around your head. This is all set against a backdrop of Canary Wharf just on the horizon, adding to the spectacle.

Should you find yourself in London, I highly recommend you visit this superb pocket of green space. You are sure to learn something that enhances the way you view urban wildlife.

By Daniel Whitelegg



Goldeneye | Peter Cairns/2020 VISION



Thank you

Your support is vital for protecting Alderney's wildlife  
[alderneywildlife.org/donations](http://alderneywildlife.org/donations)



FRONT COVER: WILLOWHERB | LORNA WEST / BACK COVER: GREY SEAL | JACK BUSH

**Love Alderney • Love Wildlife**

An Alderney Charity (Guernsey Charities Register No. CH261)

