



**Alderney**  
Wildlife Trust

## Media Release from Alderney Wildlife Trust

Date: 2024-02-12

### **Majestic Gannets Return to Alderney's Shores: An Early Arrival Brings Joy and Excitement**

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Alderney has welcomed the richly anticipated return of the breeding gannets to its shores. The island's gannet colonies, Les Etacs and Ortac, are abuzz with activity as these majestic seabirds complete their annual migration back to their breeding grounds.

Typically, the majority of Alderney's gannets spend their winter months off the coast of North Africa, however, come January, they embark on their journey back to their breeding colonies, marking the onset of an extraordinary natural spectacle.

Over the past couple of weeks, the skies above Alderney have witnessed a steady increase in the number of gannets circling the island's gannetries. This prelude to their arrival has sparked excitement among gannet fans as they eagerly await the first few birds to land. This year's landfall is on 11th February 2024, earlier than last few years, with gannets typically returning around Valentine's Day or the 16th of February.

Once on land, gannets waste no time in reuniting with their mates. These devoted pairs, known for their lifelong bonds, engage in courtship rituals to reaffirm their connection, offering spectators a heartwarming glimpse into their world.

Alderney's gannet colonies serve as a reminder of the importance of preserving our natural heritage. The island's unique ecosystem provides a sanctuary for these magnificent creatures and underscores the need for conservation efforts to safeguard their future.

**Ends**

## Background

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### Ramsar

#### About the reserve

The West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar site comprises the western coast of Alderney and adjacent shallow waters and islets in the strongly tidal, high-energy system of the northern Channel Islands. It achieved the Ramsar designation in 2005 through regionally, nationally and internationally important populations of seabirds. In particular, the islets of Ortac and Les Etacs support over 1% of the world population of Northern Gannet. It also provides a habitat for a seal colony to the north of Burhou Island and some fish and shellfish species such as Lobster, Ormer, Bass and Plaice. The site hosts about 100 species of seaweeds, which play a significant role in supporting all marine fauna and thus the large seabird population. Besides commercial and non-commercial fishing, tourism is the main activity: there is a visitor centre that provides both educational measures for children and information materials for the public. Since designation data has been collected on 10 seabird species for population size and productivity success rates; marine habitat mapping is carried out in new locations each year and terrestrial surveys are a large part of the monitoring work. The recording of this data is continued and expanded each year by the AWT in order to better understand the ecological processes of the Ramsar site and conserve its diversity within the convention guidelines.

Species – Click on the link to find out more about key species in Alderney’s Ramsar Site

- [Northern gannet](#)
- [Razorbill](#)
- [Curlew](#)
- [Puffin](#)
- [Ringed plover](#)
- [Storm Petrel](#)
- [Fulmar](#)
- [Oystercatcher](#)
- [Shag](#)
- [Guillemot](#)

#### About the Alderney Wildlife Trust

The Alderney Wildlife Trust is one of the 46 [Wildlife Trusts](#) working across the British Isles. We are the youngest of the Wildlife Trust, forming 21 years ago and since then the AWT has received incredible support from a dedicated team of wildlife enthusiasts, what we like to think of as the ‘TeamWilder’. This team isn’t just limited to residents and AWT members, it includes people from all walks of life who have an interest in our island’s wildlife, as well as supporters and organizations from around the world. We work with the local community to engage them with their natural environment in order to protect Alderney's wildlife for the future.

[Our mission is to study, protect and champion Alderney’s wildlife. We wish to see a thriving natural island where wildlife and natural habitats play a valued role in addressing our island’s future and the climate and ecological emergencies that face us.](#)

***Alderney is a very special place and by helping the work of the Alderney Wildlife Trust you can make a difference. After all, if you love where you live, you'll want to look after it - Dr. George McGavin, Patron AWT***

## Notes to Media

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For more information and updates on Alderney's gannet colonies, please contact [ecology@alderneywildlife.org](mailto:ecology@alderneywildlife.org) or call us on 01481822935. You will also be able to watch the colony live via the Alderney Gannet Cam at [www.alderneywildlife.org](http://www.alderneywildlife.org) which will be operational from the 23rd February.