



Media Release from Alderney Wildlife Trust

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World Wetlands Day: Winter-Walkover Event

Thursday the 2nd of February is World Wetlands Day – an international day of awareness highlighting the importance of wetland habitats and our responsibility to protect and study them. This specific day was chosen as it is the anniversary of the signature of the Convention of Wetlands, which took place in the Iranian city, Ramsar, and was signed in 1971. The Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Since then, over 2,400 Ramsar sites have been designated in the world, which are appointed as a ‘Wetland of International Importance’.

Alderney’s Ramsar site was created in 2005 by the [States of Alderney](#), becoming the first in the Bailiwick of Guernsey and it now makes up one of eight Ramsar sites in the Channel Islands. Our 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 this designation through regionally, nationally and internationally important populations of seabirds and a highly diverse marine ecosystem. In particular, the islets of Ortac and Les Etacs support over 1% of the world population of Northern Gannet. Additionally, intertidal and subtidal habitats support a wide range of organisms with over 100 species of seaweed alone. The site also provides habitat for a seal colony to the north of Burhou Island and a range of fish and shellfish species, including commercially and culturally important species such as European Lobster and Green Ormer respectively.

This year, the World Wetlands Day theme is: “It’s Time for Wetlands Restoration”, stressing the importance of not just protecting, but also restoring wetland habitat. The Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) is holding a **Winter-Walkover** event on **Sunday 5th February** when will be walking the Ramsar site (Platte Saline towards Hannaine Bay) while beach cleaning and mapping invasive species with discussions on climate change drivers and other information about the site. The event will be led by our friendly and knowledgeable staff, including Dr. Mel Broadhurst- Allen, Living Seas Coordinator, and Alex Purdie, Ramsar Officer. Everyone is welcome to join in and discover this wonderful side of Alderney!

Meeting Time: 2:00 PM

Meeting Location: Fort Doyle end of Platte Saline

Please wear appropriate clothing and bring wellies.

Ends

Background

About Alderney's [Ramsar Site](#)

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 is home to a number of seabird species, such as [Northern Gannets](#), [Puffins](#), [Fulmars](#), [Shags](#) and [Razorbills](#), with some colonies being recognized for their national and international importance. We are particularly proud of Ortac and Les Etacs which support over 1% of the Northern Gannet global population. Grey seals and some fish and shellfish species (such as lobster, ormer, bass and plaice) can also be spotted within the Ramsar site.

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 in addition to a range of subtidal and intertidal species and habitat surveys, and terrestrial surveys of flora and fauna have broadened our understanding of the Ramsar sites habitats and species. 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.

Following observations of a decline in Burhou's puffin population and concerns of disturbance impacting breeding success, the AWT, in collaboration with the States of Alderney, the Alderney Marine Management Forum, Alderney Harbour Office and local fishermen, designated a '[Puffin Friendly Zone](#)' in 2018. This zone, which is in place during the annual puffin breeding season, aims to provide the puffins with a safe area to rest, undisturbed by visiting or passing boats.

Members of the public and ecologists are able to observe Burhou's puffin population from our '[Puffincam](#)', which streams live throughout the breeding season and gannets from '[GannetCam](#)'. This enables detailed surveys to take place without disturbing the puffin. Recordings from our cameras can be accessed throughout the year on the [Living Islands Live Facebook Page](#).

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

For further information, please contact:
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