



Media Release from Alderney Wildlife Trust

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Gannets are back: They love Alderney summers as much as you do

The gannets are back. There has been something in the air the past couple of weeks, look out onto Alderney's Les Etacs and Ortac and you will have seen a steady increase in the number of gannets circling the island's ganntries.

The 6th of February 2026 marked this year's landfall, as the first of the birds touched down on Les Etacs. This year's arrival is a week earlier compared with 2025, with gannets typically returning to Alderney around Valentine's Day.

Young gannets often interchange ganntries within the eastern Atlantic, with many settling to breed at sites other than their natal colony. However, once firmly settled, adults exhibit strong site fidelity and do not change colonies. As a result, the adult breeding gannets making landfall on to Alderney's ganntries will return year after year following their winter absence.

After arriving ashore, the gannets are quick to reunite with their partners. The male establishes and secures a nest site through ritualised territorial displays. These devoted birds are known for their lifelong pair bonds, which are reaffirmed through lengthy and conspicuous greeting ceremonies on the nest, offering viewers the chance to observe a remarkable natural spectacle.

Alderney's gannet colonies emphasise the importance of sustaining our natural heritage, with the island's unique ecosystem providing a sanctuary for these seabirds, underlining the need for continued conservation efforts to safeguard their future.

Watch the action unfold using the Alderney Gannet Cam, streaming live, at <https://www.alderneywildlife.org/wildlife/webcams/gannet-cam>.

Ends

Background

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 as well as 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.

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 more information and updates on Alderney's gannet colonies, please contact ecology@alderneywildlife.org or call us on 01481822935.