



# Volunteer Newsletter

Issue 3  
Autumn 2020

*We hope this newsletter will keep you up to date with what volunteers are up to throughout Manx Wildlife Trust. If you'd like to find out more about wider volunteering opportunities, please contact [enquiries@manxwt.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@manxwt.org.uk). You can also keep in touch with what is happening with MWT by looking at our new Website ([mwt.im](http://mwt.im)), our [Facebook](#) page, [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#). The Spring/Summer edition of our member's magazine *Manx Nature* is also available online.*

## Volunteer Awards—Sarah Hickey

Earlier this year we decided to re-instate our annual Volunteer Awards and asked both members and volunteers to nominate people or groups deserving of an award. Whilst we believe that all of our volunteers deserve a big thank you for the time and effort they put in, we also want to recognise particular efforts and achievements by volunteers and volunteer groups. We decided on two categories of award – an Annual Award for outstanding contribution in the previous twelve months and a Lifetime Award for outstanding contribution over a longer period of time. All of the nominations came from other volunteers or the MWT member of staff whom the volunteer worked closely with. We were pleased to present these awards at a lunch at Greens café in St Johns, where recipients received



a framed certificate and a wooden plaque made by the Manx Workshop for the Disabled. More information about the award recipients can be found on our [website](#).

If you'd like to nominate a person or a group for an award next year, please look out for our nomination request in the spring 2021 newsletter.

## Muckers—Tricia Sayle

After an enforced break due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Muckers were raring to go when tasks resumed at the beginning of July. To date, the weekly turnout has not fallen below 20 on a Thursday so there have been justifiable concerns that we may run out cake! The bakers of course have ably risen (ha, ha) to the challenge.



Much of the summer was spent at Goshen, the Trusts largest meadow reserve on the edge of the Ballaugh Curragh. At the start of the year we began fencing what I still call the “new land” despite the fact it was acquired in 2008. The fencing is now complete, and we hope to have sheep grazing this, and the remainder of the reserve very soon. Major sessions were held pulling up cushion and cutting bracken too. As one of our largest sites, there is always plenty to do at Goshen. Many thanks are extended to Chris and Amber Cordwell who very generously covered the costs of constructing the fence – a donation in memory of Chris's brother, Michael.

Once again, a very wet July and August meant that



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ground conditions prevented our usual hay cutting taking place at Close Sartfield and Goshen and so grazing will be particularly important this winter.



September/October is the "raking season", where we cut small and or difficult areas with the sickle-bar mower and clear them by hand. This year we pushed man, woman, and machine to the limit to try and cut larger areas such as some of the wildflower meadows at Close Sartfield. Thankfully, we had some nice warm, dry weather in September to do this. At one point we even tried to draft in the old machine which although it started on the second pull (pretty impressive given it hadn't been used for at least ten years) was simply not up to the job.

The research by our five local naturalists continued in 2020 around restrictions, building on our knowledge of Cooldarry and Dalby Mountain, but also looking at four additional sites: Close e Quayle, Aust, Ballachrink and Goshen. The final reports are awaited but the most exciting find to date was by Kate Hawkins of a Speckled Bush Cricket. These are protected under the Wildlife Act, 1990 and there are only a few records for it on the Island, mainly from the Glen Chass area. Bat surveys have also been taking place and as autumn gathers pace, fungal forays have begun in earnest.

Botanical recording continued as usual on many of the reserves and I am very grateful to Amber Cordwell who joined me on many of these visits, for her skill and enthusiasm for wildflowers. This year's highlight was the Isle of Man cabbage (*Rhynchosinapis monensis*), found at Cronk y Bing. This is the only plant named after the Isle of



Man and it is protected under Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Act, 1990.

The Muckers continue to be incredibly hard working and enthusiastic for the reserves, and their efforts are very much appreciated. Without their

support and dedication, my job would be impossible, and we would not have such fantastic reserves showcasing Manx wildlife.

A big thank you to all those who have helped on the reserves so far this year in whatever capacity.

### **Southern Group—Margaret Kelly**

Perhaps not surprisingly it has been a quiet season at Scarlett Visitor Centre. However, we were fortunate that we were able to open after lockdown and could fly the flag for MWT for those visitors who did pop in. These visitors were mainly locals out for a walk or bringing their children or grand-children to look at the rock pools.

During August and the beginning of September "Staycationers" exploring the south of the island called in. Some said that although they had lived on the island for many years, or all their lives in some cases, it was their first exploration of Scarlett.

We decided against having items from the MWT shop on sale and donations were well down. It is usually holiday-makers from off island who contribute most to these. Locals tend not to have their purses with them. However, a successful "Cuppa and Cake" afternoon was generously supported and we were very grateful to Amber Cordwell who on the same afternoon lead a wonderful walk and talk about the wildflowers of Scarlett. Amber so enthused her audience that several returned during the following days to take another look at the plants she had pointed out, some of which are the only known survivors of their kind on the island.



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Thank you to all who volunteered to cover the sessions at Scarlett this summer. It could not happen without you.



For news about the wonderful work being done and wildlife found at Ballachurry Nature Reserve, please look at the [Ballachurry Blogspot](#).

Meanwhile, at Earystane Nature Reserve, Cheryl has been inspiring young people to engage with nature, with lovely things to do in the hide.

## Northern Group—Viv and Ian Davies

Over the last few months, we have been busy raising funds and awareness of wildlife and MWT.

The art exhibition at House of Mannan has just closed (again!) but you can still buy artwork online for that special Christmas present! As mentioned in the last newsletter this was the brainchild of Jean Buck and was taken forward by MWT with MNH.

Over the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> August in place of a bag pack Northern volunteers “manned” a stand at Ramsey Coop selling raffle tickets for two hampers one for adults the other for children. The hampers were provided by the Coop and the staff were incredibly supportive as were the many Coop customers! We collected a whopping £1,122.00. We have been invited back and hope to hold

another raffle in early December.

The Ayres Visitor Centre opened between 1st July and the middle of September. Unfortunately visitor numbers were down due to the lack of tourists, however what I think we all found particularly rewarding was the number of Manx residents who had not been to the AVC or even the Ayres before, coming to the north on staycation or even coming from Ramsey and surrounding villages.

On 26<sup>th</sup> September we joined up with the Isle of Man Fungus Group for a Fungus Foray at Glen Shoggle (Ballaugh). The weather was perfect. Mike and Karen with



Liz Charter guided three groups and commented “delightful people to talk to and who took a great interest in the fungi we showed them. It’s rather

like a treasure hunt”. In all 45 different fungi were identified and if anyone would like the list it is available on request. Considered “very interesting finds” were the stinkhorn and the green *Russula aeruginea*.

The Ayres Visitor Centre closed on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September after a topsy turvy season due to Covid, only getting fully into stride after the schools broke up in late July. More local visitors than usual, many on staycations in Ramsey, and some Guernsey visitors; less interest than usual in the shop items for sale but surprisingly overall numbers on a par with previous years. Volunteers met for tea and cake on the Sunday taking advantage of the rare occasion to meet up and chat. Planning is now underway for next year!

## Wildlife Gift Shop



The gift shop has been busy as usual, and although it has missed the normal tourist trade, more people have been ‘buying local’. Despite being kept busy,



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some of the volunteers have managed to take a breakover the summer, with a visit to Guernsey by Jacqui and wreath making by Caron.

If you are looking for Christmas gifts (I know it's early!), the shop has a range of lovely items. You can also buy gift membership packages and members receive a discount in the shop.

## Festival of the Sea and Marine Mammals—Lara Howe



Festival of the sea 2020 was the biggest and best, with 1000's of people visiting the event over the weekend. We had a great selection of marine life on show, with the crabs, lobsters and catsharks stealing the show. Of course this wouldn't be possible without the wonderful help and

support of an army of volunteers, both helping with the set up and take down, as well as the weekend itself. Thanks to Discover Diving and local divers for collecting the critters for the tanks. Lloyds Bank also helped out over the weekend with staff manning the tanks.



The seal surveys are currently underway on the Calf of Man, with Mollie and Breeshey getting stuck in from day one. Pups are being born around the Isle of Man, so there have been calls from the public about white pups hauling up around our coast. Our seal sitters have been doing their bit and keeping a watchful eye on these youngsters and making sure they are out of harm's reach.

I can tell the weather is turning as we are getting more reports of dead marine mammals washing up, mostly seals. Our volunteers have been out and about recording these incidents. Hopefully there won't be too many over the winter. I'm looking to run some more training soon so, if you're keen to get involved, watch this space!

## Calf of Man—Aron Sapsford



The major project completed this season has been work on the Millpond to remove invasive Horsetail and increase water

surface area through the removal of silt. This was started in mid-August by corporate volunteers JTC and completed by end of September by wardens and other volunteers – a long but necessary job.



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Other more routine tasks being completed by our small team of long-term volunteers are: bait-point checking; bracken/heather clearance; dry stone walling; habitat management, including fuschia cutting and willow coppicing; butterfly census; assisting with daily recording and census work; and data input analysis. General maintenance around the Observatory includes painting doors and gates and repainting Warden's kitchen.

### Calf Seal Survey—Mollie and Breeshey

We arrived on the Calf ready for anything the Manx weather could throw at us, and happily spent most of September wearing t-shirts and re-applying our sun cream! The first few weeks gave us the perfect opportunity to explore the island and get to know the bays and inlets that would soon be teeming with squirming white seal pups. Once the pupping season got underway, we settled into a routine of surveying half of the island every other day, and began the daunting but rewarding task of identifying the returning mothers. We were lucky enough to witness the live birth of little Vita near the start of the season, and have been able to watch her grow; from her first swimming lessons to her moulting into a fully developed juvenile, ready to take on life in the Irish Sea!

October has seen us donning our waterproofs and perfecting the daily lighting of the log burners; a real treat to sit around for sociable evenings of eating, board games and, of course, the daily log of the species observed around the island. We have also enjoyed trying our hand at some of the essential estate maintenance, from dry-stone walling to removing the horsetail from the pond – with the blisters to prove it! It has been incredible to spend time living and breathing the Calf of Man and its amazing biodiversity: a



unique opportunity to, albeit briefly, call this place 'home'. For a video update from Mollie and Breeshey, click [here](#).

## Citizen Science—Dawn Dickens

### Invertebrate Group

This summer our invertebrate group have been very busy catching up after lockdown. They have been doing transects of the Curraghs to find out more about the species that are inhabiting the area. They are using a mixture of pitfall traps and malaise traps, sweep netting.



As part of Manx Wildlife Week the MWT Invertebrate group hosted a drop in session at the Curraghs Wildlife Park, where the public could come and look at invertebrates of the Curragh under the microscope and also learn more about the glorious world of invertebrates. There was a guided tour showing the different trapping techniques along the transect.



The photographer Jonathan Burton was also in attendance and has captured the glorious invertebrate fun.

If you are interested in joining

the invertebrate group, which meet every third Saturday of the month, contact Dawn - [education@mwt.im](mailto:education@mwt.im). Everyone is welcome, from beginners, where there is a 20 minute session on classification and insect anatomy before the session to help you get started, to invertebrate experts!



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## Other surveying projects

We currently have volunteers monitoring a range of habitats and species. Kate is monitoring the salt marsh at Poyll Dooley and looking at the impact of dog walking on this valuable habitat.



Lizzie is recording species composition and abundance in rock pools along a transect of Fenella beach to monitor change over time and record any impacts of the proposed cessation of scallop shell dumping.



Freya is monitoring hedgehogs at various locations, including some of our Nature Reserves, the Ayres and Milntown. Hedgehogs have recently

been classified as vulnerable to extinction in the UK and we'd like to see how the population on the Island is faring.

Volunteers Gill and John have been continuing their hard work with the upland peat survey. This is actually a survey that is more enjoyable in the winter months, without ticks and hot weather to deal with! We have now managed to survey a massive 5000 hectares of upland peat, although we still have plenty of surveying to do before we have a full map of peat cover. This will enable the protection of peatlands, and their carbon store, for the future.



If you'd like to get involved in any citizen science projects, please get in touch.

## Admin support

We have had lots of much needed admin support, with several volunteers helping with various tasks (you know who you are!), but special thanks to John for his on-going help and to Graihagh for her cataloguing skills.

## Finally....

Thank you for your enthusiasm and hard work—we really couldn't manage without you. We're hoping to work out how many hours our volunteers give annually but, although this is a work in progress, we know it is many thousands!

Thanks also to those who nominated volunteers to receive awards—I know they were gratefully received. We hope the awards will grow in strength, so please get involved next year if you think any person or group particularly deserves an award.

We're planning to put a copy of our Volunteer Handbook on our website, so if you don't already have a copy, one will be available soon.

If you know of any volunteers who haven't received this newsletter, please could you ask them to get in touch so we can send them one?

Thanks!



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