



Volunteer Newsletter

Issue 1
Spring 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 volunteering opportunities, please contact enquiries@manxwt.org.uk. You can also keep in touch with what is happening with MWT by looking at our [Website](#), our [Facebook](#) page or [Twitter](#). The current edition of our member's magazine [Manx Nature](#) is also available online .

Much of the content in this newsletter was provided before the current situation with coronavirus, so planned events and training may be re-scheduled. We have currently postponed volunteer activities and the visitor centres and shop are closed at this time. However, we will review things as the situation changes and look forward to getting back to normal as soon as possible.

If you have some free time at the moment, maybe you could think about writing a few words for our new website? We will be showcasing the valuable work our volunteers do and would like to include some testimonials. You could write about why you volunteer with MWT and what you are involved in doing (50—100 words). If you could include a photo of yourself, that would be great!

Mires and Volunteering Officer—Sarah Hickey



In September 2019 I started work with MWT as Mires and Volunteering Officer, having volunteered for a couple of years. The 'mires' part of my role is to map the upland peat on the Island and work out which areas might be suitable for restoration. The 'volunteering' part of my role is very varied and just as interesting. While celebrating the fact that we have a number of different volunteer groups, I am also keen that all volunteers feel that they are a valued part of MWT as a whole. We are currently updating our volunteer handbook so that it applies to volunteers throughout the organisation. Our new website, which is still being developed, should make it easier for volunteers to find out what opportunities are available and to register as a volunteer. A need to comply with GDPR legislation and to simplify our data management has led to the development of a central database of volunteers.

Above all, we want to celebrate our volunteers and encourage others to join us. If you have any ideas or suggestions regarding volunteering, I would love to hear from you, so please email me sarah@manxwt.org.uk .

Celebrating Our Volunteers

MWT are re-launching our awards scheme to recognise excellence in our volunteers. All our MWT volunteers, and what they do for our wildlife, are fantastic and are extremely important to us and what we do for wildlife. Through these awards we aim to recognise and celebrate volunteers who have delivered something of particular note for Manx Wildlife. This could be over a sustained period of time, or a specific act.

We are asking you our members, volunteers and staff to nominate such individuals (or perhaps specific groups of our volunteers) who you believe are worthy of such an award. If you would like to make a nomination all you need to do is send the name(s) of the person/group you are nominating, plus a few lines stating why they deserve such an award. Please send this to Graham Makepeace-Warne, our Marketing & Membership Manager, at our Peel Office or email graham@manxwt.org.uk by the 29th May. A panel will review the nominations and decide the recipients. These will then be presented at our AGM (NB: all those chosen for an award will be contacted by MWT to ensure they would like to receive it, before any announcement is made).

Marine

January was a busy month for training volunteers. Seal sitting training was undertaken on 9th January to educate volunteers in how to monitor seals when they haul up in public places. They are taught what to look for and how to deal with the public. Strandings training was undertaken on 16th January to enable volunteers to attend dead marine megafauna and record cause of death etc. This feeds into a wider UK database for Cetaceans.

We are starting to prepare for the **Festival of the Sea** on 18th and 19th July. Volunteers are needed for a range of tasks, including helping at the entrance desk, signing up new members or helping with the tanks, either during the event or before/after with the set up. There will be marine training, for those helping with the tanks, on two separate occasions. The first round will be on the evenings of 12th and 14th May and the second will be on the evenings of 26th and 28th May. Volunteers will need to attend two of the sessions to get the complete training but can mix and match training sessions.



If you'd like to attend any of the marine training sessions or help with the Festival of the Sea, please contact lara@manxwt.org.uk or call us on 844432.

Peat Survey Volunteers

Despite the wild weather, a number of volunteers have continued to help survey the hills to find out the depth and extent of peat cover. This is a big help as we have a large area to survey, so thank you!



Midweek Muckers

The winter work of the Muckers continued, despite the wet weather, with the usual fenceline clearance and ditching work. Given the lovely weather of the last couple of weeks this now seems like a distant memory.

Before the lockdown a major project was underway to fence another portion of Goshen nature reserve. Goshen, at 42 acres, is our largest meadow reserve, secured over three occasions starting in 1995. The last part, acquired in 2008, has not been grazed by sheep for many years, but it is now felt that by constructing a stock proof fence it increases the management options and will enable controlled grazing to take place.

More work was also undertaken at Ballachrink with the felling of more conifers and the replacement of another section of fence. This is all part of the long-term plan to reduce the dominance of non-native species and a rolling programme of improving the boundaries of the meadows.

I am visiting reserves in my neighbourhood and I'm pleased to report that orchid leaves are coming up and hedgerows are full of violets and primroses which always lifts the spirits.

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

Take care everyone and stay safe.

Wildlife Gift Shop

A big thank you to our shop volunteers, whose hard work continues to raise valuable funds for MWT. A special mention goes to Richard Higgins, who has retired after volunteering for MWT and Wildlife Ltd after 12 years' service.

Northern Group

Our Northern Supporters Group organised a very successful talk on climate change by Paul Craine in Ramsey. It will not be long before our visitor centres at the Ayres and Scarlett open for the season, so if you could spare any time to help out, please get in touch. You can read more about what has been happening in the north in [Manx Nature](#).

Southern Group— Ballachurry

They say variety is the spice of life and the Ballachurry volunteers have enjoyed plenty of variety since resuming work at the Reserve last August once the bird nesting season was over. Let's see - chocolate brownies, fruit cake, ginger cake, cherry sponge, lemon drizzle, mince pies and Christmas cake, to name but a few of the refreshments kindly provided by our "baking sub-committee"!

But seriously, our work at the reserve was equally varied. August saw a general tidy up of paths and grassy areas ahead of the Open Day held on 31st August. On the day itself our volunteers were on site to put up tents (in near gale force winds!) tables and the photo display boards for our wildlife exhibition. They were also there of course at the end of the day to take everything down again. After that we dredged the streams, removed excess Brooklime from the pond, raked off grass cut by the Reserve Officer and her muckers, had several sessions cutting back brambles which continually try to invade the paths, as well as a host of other minor tasks. Most recently we were on site spreading wood chip along the muddy paths to improve access.



Now we are back to nesting bird season once more so apart from anything urgent that crops up (it usually does!) we'll be taking a break until August once more. All the work parties are documented on the Ballachurry Blog – www.ballachurryreports.blogspot.com should you wish to see more photos.

We have had consistently good turn-outs for every work party this year and the Southern Group Committee would like to thank all our volunteers. Not just the "regulars" on whom we depend so much but also those who come along sporadically when their circumstances permit. Everyone's contribution is valued. Thank you, Ballachurry Volunteers!

Behind the Scenes!

Our work is also supported greatly by volunteers working in the office or as committee members and trustees. I don't have any reports of what they have been up to for this newsletter, but I know they've been keeping busy.

Finally.....

We hope you all keep safe during this challenging period. We will keep you up to date with future plans as we see how the current situation progresses and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Thanks!