



# Volunteer Newsletter

Issue 4

Winter 2020—21

*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](#). Previous editions of this newsletter are also available [online](#).*

## Volunteering opportunities—Sarah Hickey

The winter is typically quieter for volunteering and this year work was reduced further still due to the second lockdown. Despite this, our volunteers have undertaken some impressive fundraising events as well as a range of practical conservation and survey work.

If you are looking for something a bit different to get involved in this year, our Engagement Manager, Graham, has a project you might like to help out with. MWT are embarking on an ambitious project to produce a book for our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2023 covering subjects around MWT's 50 years as a conservation organisation in the Isle of Man and our future. We already have a small team in place but we are looking for volunteers who could help with research, desktop publishing and editing/proof reading. People interested in getting involved should email [Graham@mwt.im](mailto:Graham@mwt.im).

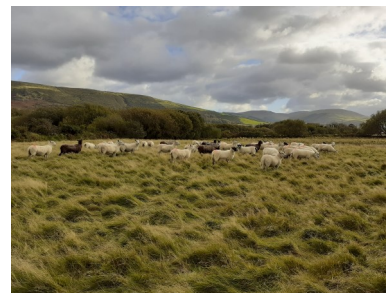
## Muckers—Tricia Sayle

The Midweek Muckers have had a bit of time off lately, but pre-Christmas and lockdown, the usual winter work continued apace on the reserves. This centred mainly around fenceline clearance and ditching on meadow reserves, for example at Curragh Feeagh as seen in the photograph.

As the largest of our meadow reserves, and lying on the edge of the Ballaugh Curragh, a great deal of ditching was undertaken



at Goshen. The satisfaction of seeing that water levels have dropped in the ditch at the end of the morning are immense, even if you have had an overtopping of the wellies in the process. We are not attempting to drain the meadows, but keep water flowing and meet our responsibilities of taking our neighbour's water. Hay making could not take place on Goshen last summer due to the wet weather making ground conditions unsuitable for the machinery used for this activity. In its place we have welcomed a lot of new "volunteers" in the form of



several flocks of sheep who have been doing an excellent job.

The Midweek Muckers is currently fully subscribed. With COVID 19 restrictions across, the regulars have been out in force for many months now and thus we unfortunately do not have the capacity to take on any new volunteers.



This will hopefully change when life returns to

"normal" so if you would like to be added to a waiting list, please email your details to [enquiries@mwt.im](mailto:enquiries@mwt.im)

There are still plenty of other ways in which you can support the work of MWT.



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## Southern Group—Margaret Kelly

Southern group had quite an active but very enjoyable end to 2020.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November the Port St. Mary Methodist Church hall was filled to capacity by folk keen to hear our CEO, Leigh Morris, give a talk about his career, his time on St. Helena and the future path for Manx Wildlife Trust. They were not disappointed as they were greatly engaged by Leigh's excellent presentation and his enthusiasm. Hot drinks, home-made cakes and a raffle followed and nobody was in a rush to leave. A lady who is a MWT volunteer at Scarlett Nature Discovery Centre (AKA Scarlett Visitor Centre) was moved to come into the kitchen and offer to join the Southern Group committee. She asked if she needed to be interviewed. We handed her a tea towel and happily accepted her on to the committee.



The morning of 5<sup>th</sup> December was very cold but dry and calm as a few volunteers wrestled with cold, numb fingers to erect a large tent at Ballachurry Reserve. This was to be a shelter and refreshment point for a Christmas

themed family wildlife walk organised by Dawn Colley. There was a rumour that Father Christmas might be in the area – having, of course, completed his self isolation after arriving on the island. (One little boy questioned us quite closely about FC's adherence to the Covid rules!) Numbers for this event were limited and places for children were to be booked on Eventbrite. The number of accompanying adults didn't matter too much and there was no charge for them. Dawn was a little surprised at how quickly it booked up. As our guests arrived we were all surprised to find that several of the booked "children" were members of a hen party celebrating a friend's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. They were very jolly and sang Christmas carols on their way round! Santa did turn up and in the bird hide left each child a lovely goodie bag to take home. A huge "thank you" to Dawn for her generosity, good nature (well it is a nature reserve) in taking the unexpected in her stride and providing a fun afternoon for young and not so young.

12<sup>th</sup> December was our Christmas Wreath making workshop. This has become a much anticipated event thanks greatly to the hard work and resourcefulness of two of our committee – Janet and Karen. Those who attend work hard and we love seeing the finished wreaths. Tucked away at Mullin-y-Carty, the Scout Centre near Silverdale, it is a quiet retreat to take some time out, enjoy the smell of the winter greenery provided for the wreaths and do something creative and useful. Thank you to the volunteers who helped on the day or provided mince pies.

For up-to-date reports and fantastic photographs from Ballachurry Nature Reserve, please visit the [Ballachurry Blog](#).



## Northern Group—Viv Davies and Kim Etherton

Despite a difficult year for fundraising, the Northern Group have achieved a great deal. A fantastic Christmas raffle sponsored by the Ramsey Coop on 12<sup>th</sup> December raised a phenomenal £888.95. The event provided for a photo opportunity for the raffle and also for the "hand over" of the cheque from the Coop to MWT as one of their charities for 2020.

Jean Buck organised also organised a fundraising event in Shoprite, Little Switzerland in November, which raised over £700.



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Thoughts and actions are swinging into place to open the Ayres Nature Discovery Centre over the Easter weekend (2 April to 5 April) and from 1 May to 12 September as long as we can find volunteers to fill the rota.

### Wildlife Gift Shop—Clive Alford

There have been ups and downs in the shop over the last few months, including closure due to the second lockdown in January. Two of our regular volunteers, Barbara and Jacqui, have retired and Shop Manager Rachel is due to retire at the end of this month. Rachel has been Shop manager for nearly 10 years, managing the successful move to Peel from St Johns. She has made a huge success of stocking the shop with a wide range of items, including art work, books, eco-friendly goods, binoculars and children’s toys. She will be sorely missed but we wish her all the best and a happy retirement.

### Terrestrial Survey and Conservation Work Ramsey Forest

Work continues on the Ramsey Forest Project, with help from our intern Hannah, who has been busy tree planting. For more information on the project please visit our [website](#).



### Peat Survey

Volunteers continue to brave the weather and collect data for the peat survey. We have surveyed half of the upland peat on the Island and work has now begun on a pilot restoration area. For more information on what we have achieved so far, see our [website](#).

### Marine Survey Work—Lara Howe

We have been fortunate to have had help from two very keen interns over the last couple of months—Tobey and Hannah. They have been busy trialling methodologies for the pea mussel/clam work in the Curragh. This has involved a couple of trips into the Curragh to find suitable locations for sampling and deciding on suitable methods.



Tobey and Hannah have also been in Ramsey looking for Pacific oysters on the Iron Pier and removing them – they are invasive. They have also been helping in the office with various tasks, for example helping to maintain the ‘dead mammal strandings’ database and writing the outstanding annual reports, managing the ‘adopt a dolphin’ administration.

### Citizen Science

#### Surveys in Ramsey—Kate Silverthorne

Once a month, I survey two sites in Ramsey. The first is the sand dunes along the North Shore, and the second is Poyll Dooley Nature Reserve. Unbeknownst to many, the sand dunes comprise North Shore Mooragh Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). It was designated an ASSI thanks to its rare plant life, such as broom rape, sea holly, and, in theory at least, Isle of Man cabbage (although it hasn’t been seen there for a while). There are not many sand dunes around the Isle of Man, making this an



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increasingly rare habitat. Threats include erosion, littering, dog faeces upsetting the nutrient levels, and invasive plants (including dumped house plants). Each month I measure the width of the dunes, and record the number of dog faeces and litter. Thankfully someone much more skilled than I monitors the plant species.



The second site, Poyll Dooley, is a surprisingly scarce habitat on the island – a tidal salt marsh. This is the area along the Sulby River that becomes submerged at each high tide. Salt marshes play an important role by acting as a carbon sink, but in

the British Isles are under threat from human development, rising sea levels and climate change. Furthermore, the salt marsh at Poyll Dooley is subjected to considerable human pressure, primarily from walkers and dogs. I walk four pre-defined transects through the salt marsh and record human and dog footprints, sward growth, litter and dog faeces.

The data I collect are sent to DEFA for them to monitor how these two areas are doing.

One of the highlights of surveying two areas so close to the town centre is the curious folk who ask what I'm doing. Many don't realise the uniqueness and fragility of the sites, and want to see them do well.

## Beach Litter Surveys

We have a number of volunteers and groups who take part in beach litter surveys around the Island. These surveys provide valuable data on the amount of beach litter and where it comes from, so we can target efforts to reduce it. A special thanks goes to young volunteer Lara, who has continued to regularly collect data for this survey over the winter months.

If you'd like to get involved in these surveys, please get in touch.

## Seasearch



MWT are now the IOM Seasearch coordinators and will be looking for new volunteers to be trained up to help with this important citizen science project.

## Other News

We have sadly lost two of our committed volunteers over the winter period, Anne Kaye and Lynda Nolan. They were both loved and respected members of MWT's volunteering community and you can read more about their work for wildlife in our members magazine Manx Nature.

## Events

### Ramsey Forest

We are looking for volunteers to help with path building at Hairpin Woodland Park on Sunday 28th February. If you're interested in helping out, you can find more information on our [website](#).

### Northern Group

If you're interested in the wildlife of the Calf of Man, Northern Group have an exciting event planned on 4th March in Ramsey

### Finally....

Thank you for your enthusiasm and hard work—we really couldn't manage without you. 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?

I'd like to invite any regular volunteers who would like to contribute to future issues of the volunteer newsletter to get in touch—it's always nice to hear what people have been getting up to.

Thanks!



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