



Manx
Wildlife Trust
Treisht Bea-Feie
Vannin

Annual Report

2022-2023

Contents

2-3	CEO's Report, Leigh Morris	12-13	Supporter Groups, Margaret Kelly & Kim Etherton	22	Engagement, Graham Makepeace-Warne
4-5	Reserves, Tricia Sayle	14-15	#TeamWilder, Lucy Chapman	24	Community, Hannah Phillips
6-7	Marine, Dr Lara Howe	16	Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch, Bryony Manley	25	Digital Communicaitons, Rachael Harrop
8	Festival of the Sea, Clare Rogerson	17	Manx Bat Group, Nick Pinder	26-27	Arachnids, Kate Hawkins
9	Biological Recording Jenny Sharp & Philippa Tomlinson	18-19	Internship, Rachel Smith	28	Action for Wildlife, Andree Dubbeldam
10-11	AES, David Bellamy	20-21	The Calf of Man, Aron Sapsford	29	Education, Beth Penhallurick
				30-31	Peatlands, Sarah Hickey



BACKGROUND IMAGE: LUCY CHAPMAN



CEO's Report

February 2022 to January 2023

Leigh Morris



A windy first visit to Creg y Cowin with Graham and Andree

Governance, Administration and Partnerships

We have new Council leadership, with Simon Cain becoming Chair, Antony Boyd - Treasurer, and Magnus Grinneback - Chair of our trading arm 'Wildlife Ltd'. A more formal staff structure was adopted, with our trading arm, Head of Engagement, and soon to be Head of Conservation & Land reporting direct to the CEO, with teams working under them.

Partnership working remains key. We continued our positive relationship with the IOM Government, particularly the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA), and strong linkage to the Manx National Farmers Union, which is mission critical for us in terms of our Agri-environment Scheme (AES) delivery. We work increasingly closely with IOM Woodland Trust, to help plant trees across our projects. Manx National Heritage (MNH) are another key partner, and we were delighted to re-secure the contract to manage the Calf of Man Bird Observatory. We increased our collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) federation, bringing substantive benefits of funding and knowledge exchange, and we increased the profile of our work through hosting a visit by TWT ambassador, actor David Oakes.



Actor & TWT Ambassador, David Oakes with Leigh at the Sound

Our work with corporate partners expanded, notably Lloyds Bank International, KPMG, and Manx Telecom and Utmost (who are the first businesses to sponsor specific MWT nature reserves). Additionally, our partnership with Island Escapes remains a flagship one in respect to our eco-tourism offer.



Leigh with John Keggins of Island Escapes

Through our consultancy business 'Ecology Vannin' we are working closely with Hartford Homes developing an IOM model to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within HH's housing developments. It is hoped this will develop an impactful model for wider application in-Island and to share more widely.

To improve the efficiency of our office operations several valuable steps were undertaken in this year. No.1 Accounts delivered a thorough restructuring of our accounting systems, and the reorganisation of our offices was completed, with an upgrade of all ICT equipment thanks to the Manx Lottery Trust. We developed our health and safety capacities by updating our health & safety handbook, having 23 staff and volunteers complete First Aid training, and purchasing two automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) - one for our Peel office and one to accompany volunteers undertaking practical tasks.

Conservation Impact

This whole report showcases the excellent and growing impact we have delivered for Manx nature. My own highlight remains the DEFA AES, which continues to offer the tremendous opportunity to positively help Manx farmers do more for nature across over 75% of our Island. Through our AES Officer, David Bellamy, we have exceeded our expectations in terms of our interactions and impact over the initial two+ years.

Biological data is crucial to focus our efforts and measure our impact. The Manx Biodiversity Recording Partnership (MBRP) is led by three organisations, MWT, DEFA and MNH, and this year we were awarded the MBRP delivery contract. Dr Jennifer Sharp joined us as Biological Recorder, alongside Dr Philippa Tomlinson, and their aim is to greatly increase the pipeline of IOM biological data.

The last year has seen us expand our nature reserves. We signed a 100-year lease with DEFA for the core piece of land at Cloughbane (42 acres / 17 hectares) for the MWT Hairpin Woodland Park (HWP).



Leigh and Simon Cain with Minister Barber and Jason Bolt from DEFA

We have also taken on the management of Billown Quarry ASSI, in partnership with Colas Ltd, and we purchased 9.4 acres at Lough Cranstal and 5 more at Goshen to expand our existing reserves.

There is much debate about the feral wallaby population, which is centred around the Ballaugh Curragh. This is our only RAMSAR site, and therefore the wallabies are an important conservation issue.



Ben and Katir Harrower conducting the wallaby survey

To enable the IOM to facilitate a more informed discussion, we commissioned BH Wildlife Consultancy to survey the wallabies living in the Curragh, using a drone mounted thermal image camera. Amazingly there are <600 within the Curragh area alone.

Engagement & Education

Encouraging, enabling, and empowering people to act for nature is one of our core goals. In line with TWT we created a new bilingual MWT logo, which is being rolled out via new signage across our sites. We launched the MWT element of the TWT '#TeamWilder' programme, and appointed Lucy Chapman as our coordinator. Lloyds Bank International funded Hannah Phillips, our first Community Ranger - who is doing a fantastic job, including establishing community groups at MWT Onchan Community Wetlands, and at the Milntown Estate, which is expanding and establishing well.



Milntown Head Gardener, Adam Quayle with Hannah and Lucy

The IOM Arts Council supported us in appointing the first MWT UNESCO Biosphere Artist in Residence. Clare Payne delivered magnificently, resulting in the Arts Council agreeing to fund the scheme for three more years. Wildlife Gardening is taking on a stronger focus, with trials of a Manx 'Polli-nature Mix' (created by Philip Payne, MNH Horticulture Manager), our Milntown Gardening Group, and developing community gardening projects in Douglas.

The HWP at Ramsey is set to be our major site to engage people with nature. Milntown Estate is key partner, and the Rotary Club of Douglas have chosen the HWP as their key project to mark their 200th anniversary and are providing funding for an official opening in 2024.

In our education delivery we said farewell to the amazing Dawn Colley as our Education Officer and welcomed Beth Penhallurick in her place. We re-secured the IOM Govt Education Contract, and our ambition now is to connect to every Manx school pupil.

Although our 50th anniversary year will be covered in next year's report, I must end on what an outstanding year for MWT impact it has been to date. Highlights include our Anniversary Ball at the Comis, our Volunteer event at Government House, purchasing 105 acres at Creg y Cowin as part of the TWT/Aviva temperate rainforest project and hosting related TWT Town Hall and Wild Live events, the launch of official Manx stamp and coin sets celebrating the work of MWT, and securing funding to recruit our first Head of Conservation & Land. Our 50th year is proving to be a landmark one!

Reserves

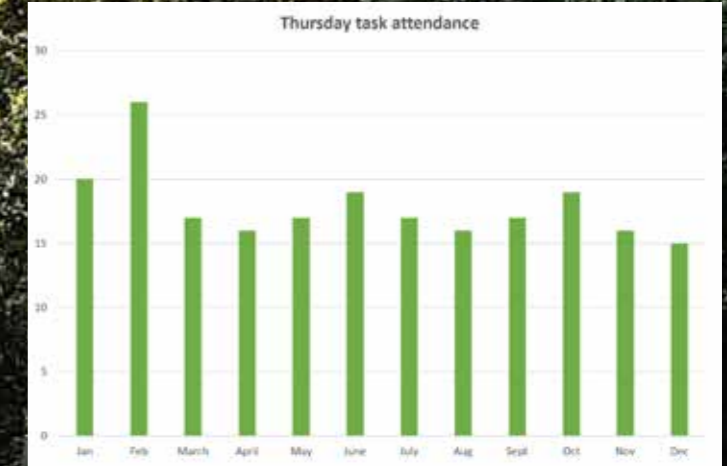
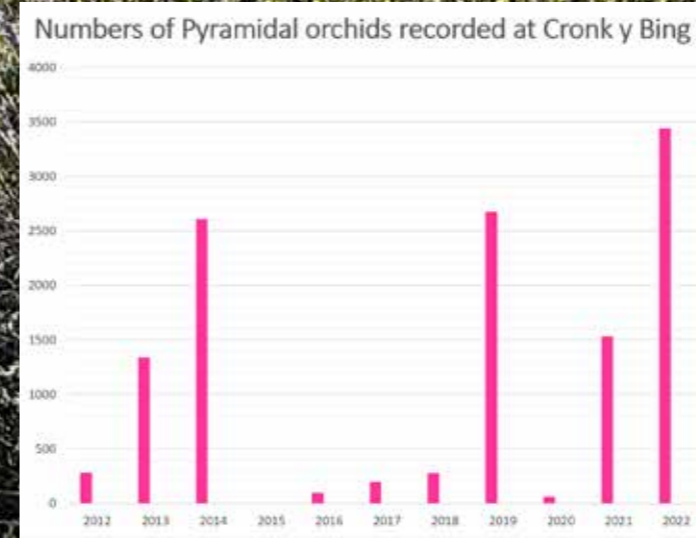
Tricia Sayle,
Reserves Manager



Greater butterfly orchid



Pyramidal orchid



2023 Highlights

- Over 3,440 pyramidal orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) recorded at Cronk y Bing;
- Greater butterfly orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*) reappearing after five years at Moaney and Crawyn's Meadows;
- 10 species of fly recorded on MWT nature reserves that are new records for the Island;
- Visit by two representatives of Plantlife UK;
- Expansion of Lough Cranstal nature reserve.

All the nature reserves acquired pre 2020 have been managed for many years and most of the work undertaken is maintenance of what has been achieved and part of a long-term plan. A typical year starts with completing the annual winter fenceline clearance and ditching. The early part of the year may include any major tree and scrub work, including coppicing of willow and occasionally hazel. After a short break, while birds are nesting and plants flowering, work begins on bracken and invasive weed control which in turn is followed by the raking season when hand cutting and clearing of awkward areas is required.

2022 saw the coppicing at Close Sartfield resume with the market for hedge laying materials continuing to develop nicely. Coppice block 1 yielded some nice stakes and binders in addition to the usual wattle fence panels. All these products were sold for just over £800.

Approximately 3,314 hours were spent on practical work on 22 of the reserves in 2022, primarily undertaken by me and the Muckers with around 47% of this time spent at Close Sartfield and Goshen.

I was very pleased to be able to show Paul Rowland and Andy Kearsey of Plantlife (a UK based charity) around Moaney and Crawyn's Meadows and Close Sartfield last year. They were blown away by the number of orchids at Close Sartfield even though it was pouring with rain on the day! Moaney and Crawyn's Meadows were purchased by Plantlife in 1995 and are managed on their behalf by MWT. It was great that there were a couple of greater butterfly orchids for them to see too. Andy and Paul were also able to join Amber Cordwell and me at the pyramidal orchid count at Cronk y Bing and it was fantastic to be able to share our enthusiasm for all things botanical. Pyramidal orchids have been recorded at Cronk y Bing ASSI since its purchase in 1993. Attempts to count them began in 2012. They were present in 2015 but were "too numerous to count" (the counts at that time being undertaken by a lone surveyor). Numbers are very much influenced by the weather in the early summer.

The research by our local naturalists continued throughout 2022, building on our knowledge of the flies, spiders, moths, fungi and birds for Cooldarry, Dalby Mountain, Close e Quayle, Aust, Ballachrink and Goshen. Kate Hawkins recorded a new

harvestman at Aust and a new spider at Dalby Mountain Fields. Cooldarry proved good for flies with six of the ten new flies being recorded here. This was also the site for a new fungi *Cluvulinopsis laeticolor* recorded by Liz Charter and Karen Rodger. Over 160 species of fungi have now been recorded there.

Bat surveys were also undertaken at Glen Dhoo last year with four bat detectors put out on site for four consecutive nights between May and September and eight species were recorded. Montbretia is a Schedule 8 species found in many places around the Island. Along with Japanese knotweed, it is an offence under the Wildlife Act, 1990 to allow it to spread into the wild. In common with the other species on the list, Montbretia is very invasive. A programme of systematic removal has been initiated and sustained at several nature reserves and 2022 saw the expansion of this initiative to Cooldarry. Manx Telecom (MT) have generously sponsored this reserve for two years and four tasks were held with MT staff during the year to remove Montbretia. In total, over 70 large bags were filled with the corms and removed from the site for safe disposal.

On a glorious sunny day at the end of May, I was delighted to host a members-only visit to three of our small meadow reserves culminating in a picnic in Fell's Field (see background image). It was a great opportunity to showcase the value and beauty of wildflowers and the importance of this disappearing habitat.

The Muckers continue to be exceptionally hard working and passionate for the reserves, and their efforts are very much appreciated. Throughout 2022, there continued to be good turnouts on both Tuesdays and Thursdays with several volunteers undertaking extra duties and a small core out both days and staying for the full day. As a result, I can get jobs which require only a small number of helpers done, such as completion of work, preparation for the bigger work parties and tasks on small sites. Without the support and enthusiasm of the Muckers, my job would be impossible, and we would not have such fantastic reserves showcasing Manx wildlife.

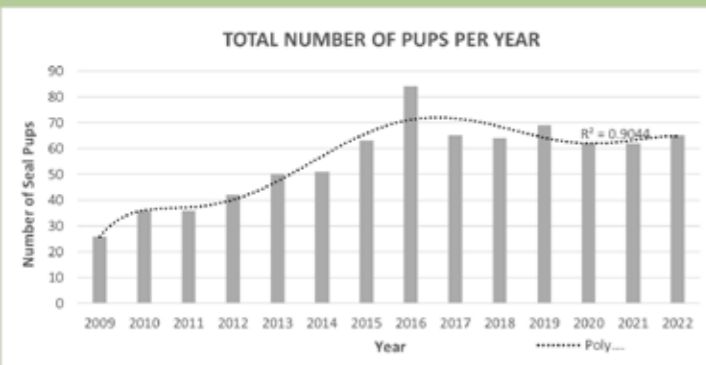
A big thank you to all those who helped on the reserves in whatever capacity.

Marine Update

Dr Lara Howe, Marine Officer

Calf of Man seal surveys

The season has just begun (4th September) with our first pup sighted the day we arrived. The mum, orange peel, is a regular at Gibdale and a few years ago was again the first mum to pup. Maybe not the best location for rearing your pup but orange peel does very well at the site and has been seen for many years. 65 pups were born last season and as you can see from the graph they have reached a stable population now since 2016. This is likely due to space available on the Calf for pupping, rather than any other factors. The map shows where the pups were born and in what numbers. Unsurprisingly there aren't any born along the east or west sides due to the steep cliffs there. Thanks to the Curraghs Wildlife Park Conservation fund for supporting this project this year.



Graph showing the trends in seal pup production from 2009 – 2022, data collected by volunteers during the annual MWT seal pupping surveys on the Calf of Man.



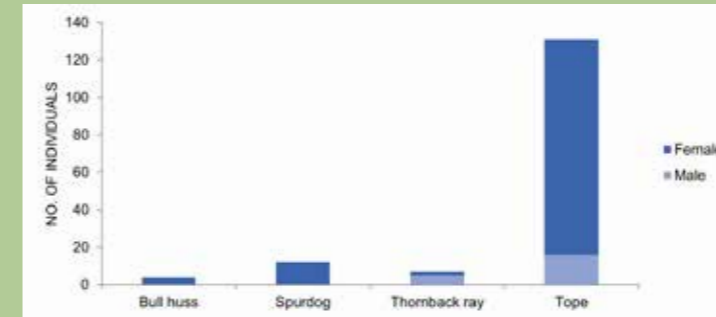
Map showing the distribution of pups around the Calf of Man in the 2022 pupping season. The relative size of the blue dot corresponds to the number of pups.



Small shark tagging

Last year was the first-time thornback rays were tagged but tope were the most common species caught, with over 100 tagged. This great work by the anglers over the last few years means we are starting to get recaptures – two this year! This might not sound that impressive, but it is where they are turning up that will surprise you and the fact that we have never caught one of our tagged sharks in Manx waters. The sharks were tagged back in 2022 off the west coast of the Island. One was recaptured off the Portuguese coast and one off the Spanish coast. Sadly, both were likely killed as they are still fished in these parts, raising the point that if these species are to be protected then multijurisdictional collaborations will be needed.

So far this year, we have run one training course with two of the marine rangers trained to help co-ordinate this project. So far, we have received 36 records but there are more to come before the season ends. Thanks to the support from Microgaming which has helped continue the project.



The number and sex of small sharks tagged in Manx waters during 2022.

Seasearch

We ran another training course this year with 8 new trainees. Surprisingly the majority were off Island but this is the benefit of Zoom. One of our trainees Samantha has gone on to complete her Surveyor course already! We are continuing our monthly get togethers, when the weather allows. The highlight so far was a snorkel at Niarbyl where we saw huge numbers of stalked jellyfish, *Halicyclustus octoradiatus*. Another highlight was the identification of *Dynamene bidentata* and *Jaera praehirsuta*, two marine isopods, found in Castletown earlier this year by Sue Harvey.



Marine Volunteers

I'm pleased to announce we now have a team of Marine Ranger that are helping Clare and myself to deliver more marine conservation and engagement, so expect to see more of them over the coming months. In addition, Alex our marine intern, joined us in August and you can read what he has been up to so far in his article.

Eelgrass

Sadly the eelgrass planted in Port Erin didn't survive the winter storms. However, this has provided us with a lot of useful information and time to reflect, where, what and how to change things going forward. In line with this the team have made two trips to the UK to see how others are progressing their journeys. The first trip was to the seagrass nursery in south Wales, run by Project Seagrass. The second trip was with Orsted to see the work they and two Wildlife Trust's are doing in the Humber estuary to restore intertidal seagrass. Both trips were hugely enlightening and will help develop our eelgrass strategy. Thanks to KPMG and Orsted for funding these trips.



Puffins

This winter saw an overhaul of the decoys and speaker system, which had been a bit temperamental toward the end of the breeding season. Thanks to Mike Howland for all his help refurbishing this. Also, a big thank you to Microgaming who not only funded some new decoys but also helped to repair the old ones. We had an enjoyable day gluing feet and beaks back together, followed up with a trip to the Calf on a rather wet day to install the decoys and the sound system. Although a huge amount of effort has gone into the repairs we didn't see any puffins attempt to breed this year but hopefully they'll try again next year.

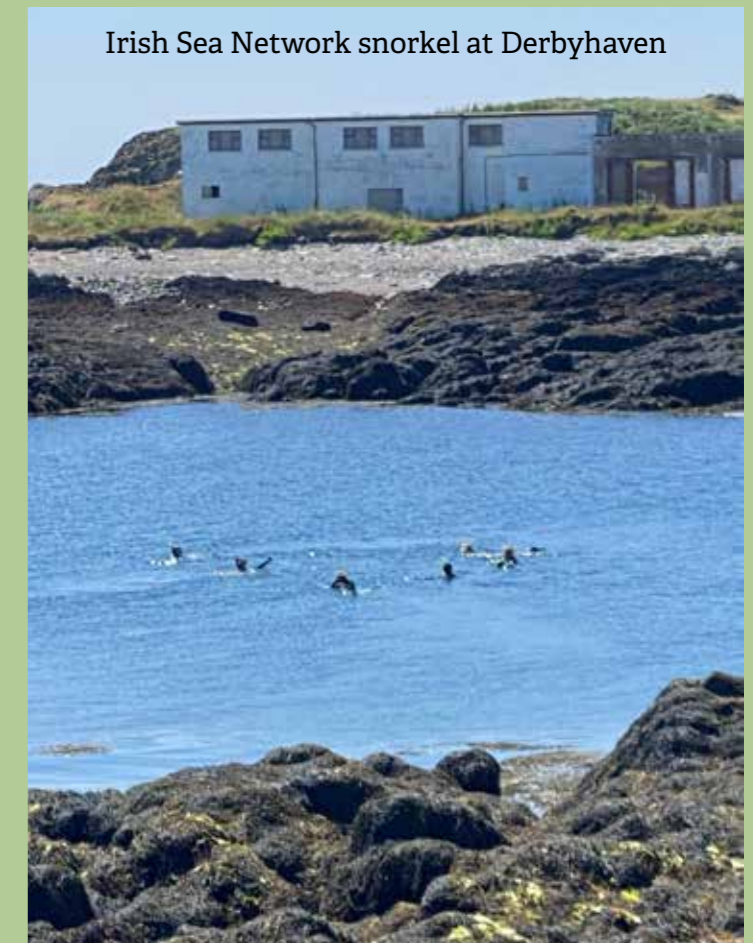


Irish Sea Network

In June we hosted the Irish Sea Network. This is a group of Wildlife Trust's and other relevant bodies from around the Irish Sea and although there are six jurisdictions sat around the table, we all know the sea has no boundaries. It was a great event, working together on a common goal to protect the Irish sea and the best ways we can manage it together, and enabling us to show off our beautiful Island, both above and below the waves.



Front row left to right: Charlotte Ravenscroft - Consultant at Lucent, Georgia de Jong Cheyndert - Head of Marine at the North Wales Wildlife Trusts, Nia Jones - Living Seas Manager at North Wales Wildlife Trust and Leigh Morris. Back Row left to right: Ben Smith - Marine Planning Officer at the North Wales Wildlife Trust, Jessica Jones - Living Seas Manager at Scottish Wildlife Trust, Lara Howe, Rachel Sharp - Director of Wildlife Trusts Wales, Dawn Thomas - Living Seas Awareness Officer at the North Wales Wildlife Trust, Beth Churn - Marine Conservation Officer at Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Daniele Clifford - Marine Officer at The Wildlife Trusts.



Festival of the Sea

Clare Rogerson, Marine Conservation Assistant

The Festival of the Sea has always been a highlight of the MWT calendar and, despite the weather's best efforts, this year was no exception.

The event was once again generously sponsored by Oceanweb Ltd and commenced on Friday evening with the ceremony for the annual 'Splash-in Underwater Photography Awards', judged and catered by Discover Diving of Port St Mary.

Speakers included MWT CEO, Leigh Morris, MWT Marine Officer, Dr Lara Howe and MHK Michelle Haywood.

The categories were closely contested but the overall winner for the evening was Kathryn Fowler, who's photographic skills and subject diversity won the judges over.

The focus of this year's festival was our four marine messages which encourage people to consider what they put into the sea, from litter and plastics, to chemicals down our drains, or even oils and creams from our skin. From our feedback survey, most people responded that their 'take-home' message was to be more aware of what personal impact they and their consumer choices have on the sea and specifically what not to flush down their toilet!

In addition to the fabulous marine life and beautiful display of products from our shop in Peel, there were some new additions at this year's event: our wonderful new MWT mascot, Tappee, made his first appearance and the crowds were not disappointed! Tappee (pronounced ta-vee) is the Manx Gaelic word for 'fast' and represents the speed of positive change we are hoping to achieve.

Another first for the festival was the appearance of an octopus. Octopus are extremely intelligent animals and renowned for their ability to escape but "Occo", who has been in rehab since a tentacle injury, was kindly loaned to us by Alan Taylor from Gemini Charter Boat Fishing for the weekend. We wish Occo well in his rehabilitation and look forward to his safe release, back into Manx waters.



Occo the rehabilitated curled octopus

We were also joined by Jon Chamberlain of Essex university who, ably assisted by his research students, demonstrated underwater A.I. software and its practical applications in marine ecology and conservation.

For me, the highlight of the event was a visit by Evie Roberts and her teacher, Mr Craig, who attended to record a segment for her

podcast 'Talking in the dark'. Evie, who has been blind since birth, is a student at Ballakermeen High School and uses her podcast to raise awareness about blindness and to tackle the stereotypes around disabilities. We were able to guide Evie around the Marine tanks so she could feel the textures of the creatures. Evie has agreed to stay in contact with MWT and assist us in making our events and reserves more inclusive and accessible to all.



Volunteer Jon Russell-Dunn with student Evie Roberts and her teacher Mr Craig whilst recording their podcast

A huge thank you to everyone who attended this year's event and for your contribution to Manx nature conservation. Thanks to Jon Russell-Dunn whose exceptional knowledge guaranteed a crowd around his tank all weekend, to our wonderful face painter, Julie Quine, who gave up her weekend free of charge, to Richard Fryer for the excellent and educational toilet, to Discover Diving and their fabulous "critter hunters", to our principal sponsors, Oceanweb Ltd, and to all our amazing marine-tank volunteers. We couldn't do it without you!



A visitor enjoying the marine tanks

So what's in store for next year's event? Well your feedback suggested you loved the octopus, cat-sharks and giant starfish and that you'd like to see some more of our larger marine life such as dolphins and basking sharks! There were even several requests to see a mermaid! Mermaids are generally quite elusive creatures, so no promises, but definitely watch this space for details of Festival of the Sea 2024!

Biological Recording

Jennifer Sharp and Philippa Tomlinson

From *Abax parallelepidus* to *Zygodon viridissimus*...

...from a ground beetle to a yoke moss!

The Natural History Museum defines biological recording as "the study of the location and spread of plants, animals and other living things." The Manx Biological Recording Partnership is made up of several local organisations who have been working since 2010 to establish a unified database of wildlife records. This year saw the responsibility for biological recording in the Isle of Man move from DEFA to Manx Wildlife Trust as part of the Manx Biological Recording Partnership.

Jenny took up her post as Biological Recorder in March 2023 and has had a busy first few months of learning new computer systems and meeting many of the local individuals and groups who are recording Manx flora and fauna. There have been some exciting new records for the Isle of Man this year including the discovery of two new marine isopod species and the rediscovery of yellow-vetch (which was thought to be extinct locally). Without the dedication of local amateur naturalists we would not have the breadth and depth of species data that we are privileged to hold in the Manx Biological Recording Partnership.



A distribution map from the NBN Atlas IOM. Caption: Distribution of Yellow-vetch *Vicia lutea* L. in the British Isles.

Species records are collated onto a specialised database held on the government network which allows us to map and manage the records. Datasets are regularly uploaded to the NBN Atlas Isle of Man which not only ensures that our species are 'on the map' for species research across the British Isles and via the Global Biodiversity Information Forum, around the world, but also anyone can go online and find out the distribution of species they have seen locally.

Taxon group	Number of Species observations per Taxon group
bird	567864
flowering plant	410988
fungus	26618
fern	22481
insect - butterfly	21521
insect - moth	16160
terrestrial mammal	15386
moss	9116
marine mammal	8450
cartilaginous fish (Chondrichthyes)	6020

One aspect we are trying to improve is the flow of data. Now that virtually all our records are digital it makes it easier than the days of interpreting scrawly handwriting or searching for missing information. We do still welcome hand written records, preferably on a paper form, but either way the basis of a record are the four key items: species name, date of record, location/grid reference and name of recorder. Species records are much more valuable if they are verified which means checked by an expert. For many groups verification is done by a local Recorder and preferably this person represents the British Isles organisation that deals with that group. They send off specimens for checking to specialists, often develop a checklist and work on historical records. For example, Andree Dubbeldam is the vascular plant recorder representing the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland in Vice County 71, Isle of Man. Working with the BSBI and others he has recently produced the Plants of Conservation Concern list (www.mwt.im/PoCClOM). Data is exchanged with the specialist organisations which goes towards the production of published atlases such as the Plant Atlas published by the BSBI this year. We are lucky in the Island to have several dedicated Recorders who freely give their time to study their chosen group. There are many groups which are little studied locally, such as beetles and bacteria, mosses and mites so if you would like a new hobby get in touch!

Some facts about biological records in the Isle of Man:

- Records in the database go back as far as 1580!
- There are 1,173,761 records of 7697 species on the database at the time of writing.
- The most frequently recorded group of organisms are birds (with 567,864 species observations) closely followed by flowering plants (with 410,988 species observations). The least frequently recorded group of organisms is bacteria with only one record. This demonstrates that the records only reflect what is recorded, not necessarily the true numbers of species or individuals locally.
- In 2023 so far there have been 16,028 species records uploaded by Manx Wildlife Trust and 37,859 historic species records added by Manx National Heritage.
- A detailed understanding of our biodiversity is an essential tool for conservation. Knowing the species we have, their abundance and distribution, allows us to put measures in place to protect them.

You can record sightings on our website: www.record.mwt.im or by emailing jenny@mwt.im with species name, date of record, location/grid reference and name of recorder.

Agri-Environment Scheme

Skeim y Ghymmyltaght Eirinagh

David Bellamy,
Agri-Environment Officer

We are currently mid-way through the third year of the new scheme, which has now settled down into 'business as usual' mode from the initial 'keep calm and carry on' with David rushing to get round over three-hundred farms as quickly as possible.

Recent changes behind the scenes have seen a considerable reduction and simplification of paperwork, with most applicants now only required to fill in a single, quick application form once a year. MWT have also willingly taken on a considerable administrative burden to make the scheme more user-friendly and efficient, while removing a considerable barrier for farmers; we are now able to plan, design, organise and get approval for all habitat creation and restoration projects.

This summer our focus has shifted from introductory farm visits to repeat visits, allowing our relationship with the farmer community to grow and allowing us to undertake more in-depth discussions about nature positive farming, Manx farm wildlife and explore options for on-farm habitat creation and management in greater depth.

The Manx Farmland Birds Steering Group is now fully up and running, which aims to halt and reverse severe declines in many of our birds of farmed habitats. Its most recent focus has been on increasing awareness of Tree Sparrows, a Manx bird on the edge of local extinction. Species-specific nest boxes have been put up in key areas known to have recently supported breeding populations, and supplementary feeding with white millet is being undertaken in these areas. Robert Fisher, our Farmland Birds Officer was at both agricultural shows with a collection of bird specimens from the Manx Museum to help educate farmers and the wider public about our key farmland bird species such as Lapwing, Corncrake, Skylark, Curlew and Woodcock.

Working with farmers, Manx BirdLife (MBL), the RSPB and the Manx Ringing Group we contributed to preparations for the Island's 2024 Chough Census, monitoring nesting success in a variety of farm buildings (modern and traditional) across the Island. In total, 21 active or recently-used nesting sites were visited, with several chicks being colour-ringed by Robert Fisher, the MWT Farmland Birds Officer. Curlew nest sites have also been monitored and mapped across the south of the Island, and Barn Owl nests have been monitored in the north, with several chicks ringed.

New habitat creation projects continue to pop up across the Island, including new habitats created in every parish. Wetland habitats, including shallow scrapes for wading birds have been popular, as have small copses of native trees planted in species-poor areas

which were agriculturally unproductive. Many thanks are owed to the Isle of Man Woodland Trust for their huge efforts in growing and planting many AES woodland planting projects. Working with our corporate partners, we have also started delivering 'wild work days' on farms to assist farmers with free labour for habitat restoration and creation projects where lots of hands are required. We have also been assisting the reinvigorated Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) in delivering wildlife walks, on-farm education and the Chough Award for nature-friendly, productive farming.

Our 2023 Manx Farmland Birds Calendar was distributed for free to all 343 Manx farms, highlighting the birds of conservation concern which can be found across Manx lowland farmland.

During TT Week 2023 readers of the Guardian saw a different side to the TT, with an article written by David discussing the wildlife benefits of the Island's traditional hay meadows featuring in the 109,000 printed copies and online.

In September 2023 an article about the Manx-born leucistic Hen Harrier, a female fledged in 2023 was published alongside this excellent photo from Peter Christian. It has been seen right across the Island, from Jurby to Rushen, Lonan to Santon.

David has teamed up with Reserves Manager Tricia Sayle to undertake more formal AES biological recording. In a single unimproved hay meadow in Lezayre, the team, including volunteer Amber Cordwell, recorded an incredible 330 rare Greater Butterfly Orchids. A review of these and historic records by Dr Jennifer Sharp found that this species has also been recorded there in the 1940s, 70s and 80s. Our AES work in 2021 and in 2023 confirms that this species is thriving on site, owing to sensitive farming practices. In total, this one field now has 352 records of 142 different species!



Barn Owl nestlings by David Bellamy



Chough nestlings by David Bellamy



Fields containing a priority habitat are now receiving additional habitat management payments:

- Number of fields: 1561
- Area of habitats: 7,561 ac (3,060 ha)
- Forecast payment: >£180,000
- Number of farm businesses: 134

Priority Habitats on Farmland:

- Anthill pasture
- Garee (the Manx word for marshy grassland)
- Habitat mosaics and successional habitats
- Parkland
- Pasture managed for Chough or Curlew
- Species-rich grassland
- Traditional hay meadows
- Waxcap (fungi) grassland
- Miscellaneous areas for priority birds or plants

The Numbers

As of 1 September 2023, over the two years that AES has run David has conducted:

- Farm visits: 435
- Covering: 73,499 acres (29,744 hectares)
- Percentage of Manx farmland: 73%
- Percentage of the whole Island: 52%

For the 2023/2024 year:

- 260 of 343 Manx farms (76%) are participating in the AES



MWT Southern Supporter Group

Margaret Kelly, Volunteer

At the beginning of the year the Southern Group Committee were very pleased to welcome two new members to the committee increasing its number to seven. The major part of the Committee's remit is to be a focal point for volunteers who will help MWT to manage and run Scarlett Nature Discovery Centre, near Castletown, and Ballachurry Reserve which is a wetlands site in Rushen.

Scarlett Nature Discovery Centre

This summer fourteen volunteers were on the rota for manning the Scarlett Nature Discovery Centre. They helped well over six hundred visitors to discover the geology, industrial past and natural history of Scarlett. It was nice that one of those visitors was Felicity Cain who was, many years ago, instrumental in the establishment of the Centre.

At the beginning of the season the opening was a little delayed because the access road and car park were being given a coat of tarmac. These were not the only new surfaces to be laid. A committee member and her husband kindly laid a path to the back door of the Centre.

The "Sightings" board installed last year is a success. It can be read by passers-by even when the Centre is closed.

In June the sun shone for a well attended family event. A fun Scarlett Trail Quiz for children paralleled the trail in the MWT Scarlett leaflets. Afterwards there were prizes for the children and refreshments all round.

Since Beth Penhallurick was welcomed as MWT Education Officer she has run some art and craft sessions for children's groups at the Centre.

Don't tell the MWT purists, but an unusual attraction at Scarlett is a couple of terrapins that were abandoned into the quarry lake several years ago and have surprisingly thrived. Their fame has spread this summer thanks to a Castletown resident who takes a daily walk to the Centre and en route encourages others to gaze over the wall of the quarry to spot the terrapins which are now nearly the size of dinner plates.

Ballachurry Reserve, Rushen

The big excitement at Ballachurry, apart from nature sightings, has been the completion of the boardwalk, bridge and access ramps. These are of extremely robust construction and raise the path well above the winter water level. It is very much the work of Ian Costain, with assistance from several other volunteers. There was an official opening on 4th July. Ian cut the ribbon whilst the rest of us helped by drinking bubbly (non alcoholic) and eating cake.

Another new construction on the site is a tool shed attached to the

bird hide. Not an ideal position but the only practical one.

The family of much missed Anne Kaye provided an attractive new plaque for the hide in memory of Anne whose generosity had funded the hide when the reserve was established. Anne's family attended for an unveiling ceremony in February.

The establishment of the reserve on his land was the outcome of the vision of Stan Clucas. Stan has just retired as Captain of the Parish of Rushen. Through his generosity, wildlife and people have a space to visit and enjoy. We send our good wishes and thanks to Stan and his wife Pam.

A family "Bug Hunt" held on a grey, chilly day in February half-term holiday attracted so many participants we lost count and didn't have time to notice the cold.

The dragonfly pond excavated last year was visited this summer by its first interested customers, not only dragonflies but also water insects. The pond needs completion now that we know it holds water and works.

Calm dry weather in June encouraged successful breeding for the birds that chose to use the reserve. One gorse bush seems to be particularly popular. As soon as a pair of long-tailed tits had fledged their young and vacated the bush it was occupied again this time by some finches.

Autumn is here and the work parties, suspended during the nesting season, have started. In September the water courses were cleared out so they will be free flowing during the winter. We are taken aback by the amount of vegetation growth this summer. This has to be cut back, the wildflower meadow will need cutting and raking, the hide and tool shed will need painting, the ponds cleared of weed, the reeds cut back. The cheerfulness and hard work of the volunteers make "getting stuck in" sociable and enjoyable.

Sheila Norris continues to monitor the wildlife on the reserve, recording firsts not only for the site but sometimes for the Isle of Man. It is all in her blog on www.ballachurryreports.blogspot We are very grateful to Sheila for her work. Our thanks go also to Reserves Manager, Tricia Sayle, for her guidance and support.

Coming up:

10th November is the date for the Southern Group's annual talk at Mount Tabor Church Hall, Port St. Mary. This year David Bellamy, MWT Agri-Environment Officer, will give an illustrated talk about birds of the South of the Island and their habitats. 7:30pm. £3, Students £1 Refreshments, Raffle, MWT shop pop-up stall. 9th December is the date of our Christmas wreath workshops at Mullin y Carty.

APPLEBY



MWT Northern Supporter Group

Kim Etherton, Trustee



The new solar array at the ANDC by GoGreen



Inside the ANDC by Graham Makepeace-Warne



Ayres Nature Discovery Centre

On 3rd August this year, MWTs' Patrons, His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, Lieutenant General Sir John Lorimer and Lady Lorimer, joined MWT volunteers, staff and guests to celebrate new developments at the MWT Ayres Nature Discovery Centre. Its outside wall now has an eye-catching mural painted by Clare Payne, MWT's first Artist in Residence whilst local artists Tony Kennan and Deborah Taubman painted a vibrant slice through the NNR's habitats, from beach to gorse, on an inside wall. Funding from Appleby Global enabled the production of new interpretation panels explaining the geology, ecology and human history of the area as well as the replacement of our sand-blasted perspex windows! We now have a wonderful view across the NNR towards the hills. GoGreen installed new solar panels, giving us a great deal more power with which to develop new ideas for enabling visitors to enjoy the NDC and the area's wildlife. Visitors can already find fascinating facts about our collection of beach finds, be encouraged to live more sustainably and borrow rucksacks to go out "on safari" around the NNR. MWT Ayres NDC is opened by volunteers from May to September – it will close on 17th September and plans to re-open on 4th May 2024 so do come along and discover us!

Events

The Gardeners Fair this year took place on Sunday 18th June with the usual plant sales, garden tours, cream teas and demonstrations. The event raised £1,653 for MWT with £1,273 on plant sales alone. A huge thank you goes to Viv and Ian for once again hosting the event at their lovely home in Bride. Understandably, Viv and Ian have decided this will be the last Gardeners Fair at Boayll Chirrym so we are on the lookout for a new venue for 2025.

Coming up:

Fungi, the Forgotten Kingdom is the next of the Northern Supporters Group Autumn Talks at Ramsey Town Hall, Thursday 9th November at 7pm. Join us for the third instalment of our captivating talk series, presented by Liz Charter from the Isle of Man Fungus Group. Unravel the mysteries of fungi and their impact on the natural world. Explore the hidden connections that make our ecosystems thrive and discover where to find these fascinating fungi in the North of the Island.



#TeamWilder

Lucy Chapman, #TeamWilder Coordinator

Volunteers – photo of volunteer celebration

A highlight of the year was to see 130 volunteers past and present gather at a reception at Government House to celebrate their contribution as we mark MWT's 50th anniversary (see main pic).

I'm always amazed by the huge variety of work that volunteers undertake for us. They are the backbone of the charity, and we couldn't operate without them. Here's a quick flavour of our volunteer groups.

Community reserve teams – Including the Ballachurry Bashers, caretakers of the gem of a reserve Ballachurry (see the Southern Supporter Group update), and the newer Onchan Community Wetlands volunteer team who have been working to make this small reserve a welcoming sanctuary for people and wildlife.

Mid-Week Muckers – The dream-team that contributes the equivalent of thousands of pounds worth of time, working with Reserves Manager Tricia to keep our reserves in pristine condition.

Rainforest Rangers – A new group committed to the creation of temperate rainforest at Creg Y Cowin, supported by Aviva, has been formed this year.

Marine Rangers – This team are integral to the work of the marine conservation team. Several new Marine Rangers were appointed this year.

Calf of Man – A small team of committed volunteers live on the Calf of Man over the summer season, welcoming visitors and monitoring and conserving the important wildlife there.

Festival of the Sea – Our biggest event of the year couldn't happen without the team of 20 volunteers who shared their expertise and enthusiasm with over 2000 people in July.

Seal teams – There's teams of people who check in on seals who could be in difficulty, a team of medics specially trained to help those that need intervention and a group trained to record vital data from sea mammals that have sadly died and stranded on our shores.

Shop – It's dangerous for the wallet having such an excellent shop right below the office, but good for the soul to see the lovely volunteers that have kept the tills open and customers happy for over 30 years.

Magazine deliverers – These volunteers walk miles to deliver many of our newsletters, saving hundreds of pounds in postage.

Nature Discovery Centres – Open throughout the summer season and run by volunteers who welcome visitors and share their enthusiasm for the natural wonders at the Ayres and at Scarlett.

Interns and work experience – This September we said goodbye for now to our wonderful intern and hugely valued part of the team, Rachel. More from her in her own report. We don't have capacity to offer internships and work experience to everyone who enquires but, when we can, we are always impressed with the quality and enthusiasm that the candidates bring. We hope one day to have a property where we can accommodate several interns each year and attract those from other countries too.

Office volunteers – From managing our membership to building hedgehog tunnels, we have regular volunteers who join us at the office and work remotely to keep life running smoothly at MWT.

Ad hoc projects – This year, volunteers sewed hundreds of beautiful cotton bird-bags, that are now in use in the Calf of Man. Others helped collect native Manx yellow rattle seed to help diversify grassland across the Island. Follow us on social media to stay up to date with these occasional projects.

Our volunteer wish list for 2023/24

Events support – We often have information stands at events. If you are passionate about wildlife and love talking to the public, please consider being part of our events team.

Mascot chaperone – Tappee the Little Tern needs someone to chaperone him at events as he meets new people. Could this be you?

Volunteer fundraisers – Fundraising ensures there are vital core funds available to act quickly for wildlife when it needs us most. If you, or a group of you, can organise your own fundraising event, we're here to support you.

#TeamWilder



We want the story of nature's recovery to be one that everyone feels they have a voice in. Tappee (pronounced Ta-vee) is our new mascot, generously funded by Manx Lottery Trust. His role in #TeamWilder is connecting with the Manx community and providing a warm welcome to everyone he meets as we face the serious challenge of tackling our biodiversity crisis, together. Tappee is Manx Gaelic for fast, and the #TeamWilder philosophy is that if we can inspire one in four people to take up nature as their cause, a tipping point will be created, and positive change will happen - fast.

One of the foundations of the #TeamWilder way of working is listening to people talk about what is important to them. Community Ranger, Hannah, Tappee and I had a great time over summer touring the Island and talking to people about the role wildlife plays in their lives. We've worked with Douglas Housing Association to support a resident-led garden project in one of their housing schemes, and joined the Manx Sports & Recreation Walk and Talk group on several 'green walk and talks' seeing first hand the wellbeing-boost walkers experience from getting out into nature. I have also enjoyed attending lunch-and-learns for our corporate members, talking about everything from hedgehog citizen science to nature-based solutions.

If you have a wild idea to help bring nature back in your garden, school, office, or community, we're here to cheer you on every step of the way!

If you're interested in volunteering for MWT, in any capacity, email Lucy@mwt.im and you will receive a quick form which will help us to find the best volunteer role/s for you.



Manx Whale & Dolphin Watch

January to end August 2023

Bryony Manley, Researcher at MWDW

Species	Sightings
Harbour porpoise	52
Common dolphin	13
Bottlenose dolphin (total)	112
- Moonlight and Starlight	82
Risso's dolphin	22
Minke whale	24
Humpback whale	3
Unidentified small cetacean	2
Basking sharks	16

A wet and windy summer has made sightings through dedicated surveys difficult this year. However, the great Manx public continue to report their sightings to us, and we are very grateful for the 244 we have received so far this year. Sightings particularly took a plummet in July due to the poor weather. To give an idea of the effect of weather on sightings, despite patchy sightings through July and early August on a lovely calm day on 16th August all five of our local cetacean species were seen. Harbour porpoise, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, and Risso's dolphin were all seen in Manx waters, with a few minke whales seen just outside our 12-mile boundary. It just goes to show that it's not that these animals are not here in the rougher weather, but that the wind, waves, rain, and mist makes it much harder for us to spot them!

It has been another good summer for common dolphins with some decent sized pods of 30 to 50 dolphins. Alongside these more usual pod sizes there was a magnificent sighting reported to us by Harry Gell on 17th June from around 4-miles off Peel of up to 300 dolphins following his boat along the coast for an hour! We have also had a better start to the year for minke whales than last year with good numbers through May and June, many of which were observed feeding. We look forward to the autumn when we hope to see the minke whales coming closer to the east coast to feed on the herring.

Excitingly, for the first time since 2017 a humpback whale was spotted and photographed in Manx waters on 11th July. Just half a mile from the coast between Peel and Niarbyl it was spotted breaching clear of the water before its distinctive knobbly dorsal fin and back, providing the humpback name, was photographed by Ben and Katie Hellowell. A further two humpback whale sightings occurred in Manx waters on 13th July and 8th August, which may be of the same animal, and suggests there is plenty of good food around for these large animals.



We have had a total of 16 sightings of 20 individual basking sharks this year stretching from south of the Sound to the Point of Ayre. The first showed up slightly earlier than their mid-May expected arrival on 6th May. We would typically expect to see sharks up until the end of August but there have been no reports since the last sighting on 4th June. This is disappointingly much lower than the more promising 68 sightings in 2023. We will continue to monitor them and collect sightings and hope next year brings more sharks again.

As Manx Wildlife Trust celebrate an amazing 50 years of work it is interesting to reflect that modern cetacean field research is essentially the same age, with only the longest of data sets reaching the five-decade milestone. It was the advent of photo-identification techniques used to study whales and dolphins that have allowed individuals to be tracked over years and decades and contributed to this long-term understanding. Indeed, it was photo-identification which allowed us to confirm that our resident bottlenose dolphin Moonlight was originally from the Moray Firth on the east coast of Scotland. Moonlight, along with her daughter Starlight remain in residence in Manx waters, with Starlight approaching her 4th birthday. The pair are seen regularly in their favourite spots of Peel and Port Erin bays, whilst also venturing to Point of Ayre, Ramsey, Laxey, Douglas, and Gansey. Very interestingly this year was the first time since January 2020 that the pair were seen in the company of another dolphin. A third adult dolphin was photographed with the pair in Peel Bay by Dave Corkish on 16th May. The same day a pod of eight bottlenose dolphins was seen near Peel, so it may be that one heard Moonlight and Starlight nearby and just popped over to investigate. It may even have been a male trying to mate with Moonlight, perhaps she is in oestrous again and ready for another calf. Let's keep our eyes peeled!



Manx Bat Group

Yn possan Manninagh son craitnaghyn

2022/2023

Nick Pinder, Chairman

The Manx Bat Group made progress on several fronts during the past year and particularly in its collaboration with other wildlife bodies. It renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with Manx Wildlife Trust for a further five years and an almost immediate outcome was a revision of the criteria for the designation of wildlife sites for their bat interest.

Wildlife Sites are places of high wildlife value which are protected through the planning system as they are designated as Sites of Ecological Interest in Local and Area Plans. Although not statutorily protected they are the most important places for wildlife outside legally protected land, such as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs).

The criteria for designating Wildlife Sites for bats which were arrived at were derived from the data amassed from the 500-plus site surveys undertaken to date by the Bat Group with their static detectors. The criteria are based on overall diversity, as candidate sites should have six or more species present (two-thirds of the Manx total), and on recorded activity levels, in terms of the number of nightly recordings of both common species (ie common pipistrelle) and the less common species, such as the three species of bats in the genus *Myotis*.

The Bat Group's site surveys included several undertaken at the Chasms in a search for lesser horseshoe bats but which also disclosed high levels of diversity, sufficient to qualify the site as an ASSI for its bat fauna, particularly in winter. A recommendation to this effect was put forward to Manx National Heritage and the Department of the Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA).

The Bat Group also drafted Biodiversity Action Plans for lesser horseshoe bats and, collectively, the three *Myotis* species of bat, Whiskered, Daubenton's and Natterer's. These are now available, along with others, for species and habitats alike, on DEFA's Biodiversity web page.

Bat surveys for planning applications have been a growing part of the work of the Bat Group for several years, both in number and complexity. Planning surveys consequently take up a considerable part of the Bat Group's efforts and in the past year, for example, over twenty-five bat surveys were undertaken for projects varying from barn conversions to housing estates. Several bat roosts have been discovered as a consequence and it is hoped these will continue to prosper under the mitigations put forward to offset the proposed developments.

Monitoring known bat roosts is undertaken in part to assist the UK Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) to calculate trends in bat populations (seven species are increasing or holding their own) and in part so that we know what is happening with our own bats. For the last two or three years we have counted bats emerging at 30 or

so bat roosts annually. For the BCT Roost Monitoring Programme this must be done twice in June whereas for our roost checking programme it can be done any time the roost is in use. Whatever the purpose of the roost count it does take a lot of volunteer time and so the Bat Group was very grateful to the several new volunteers who came forward this summer to help with these counts. We managed to count 28 roosts of four different species but we have several more to add to the list next year.

Volunteers join for a variety of reasons but principally for the excitement of seeing these often misunderstood animals. Public engagement and education are therefore also a large part of our work, accomplished partly by organising bat walks in different parts of the Island. This year they have been at Peel, Silverdale, Laxey and Andreas, the latter helping to celebrate International Bat Night. We have also given talks to students studying building at Isle of Man College and to Isle of Man Construction, to educate people who may come across bats in the course of their professional work, so that they know they are protected in law and take appropriate action.

We attend Tynwald Fair and the Southern Agricultural Show to talk to people about bats and this year had a display at Peel Cathedral and Ramsey as part of the Manx Nature Show, a display of the work of many Manx wildlife organisations organised by the Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch. We were also invited by Manx Telecom to have a day in their Strand Street store talking to customers about bats, using the display board designed for us by Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch. After a lull of a couple of years we now also have several talks booked in for community groups over the coming winter.

Finally, some thanks to some local businesses for the donation of IT equipment to help administer the Bat Group and organise and collate the many bat records that we now collect. Trident Trust generously donated four laptops while Lloyds Bank International recently donated a large monitor screen, all gratefully received to assist us in our work looking after the bats of the Isle of Man.



'Internal' Report

Rachel Smith, MWT Intern 2022/23

After realising my passion for science and nature after finishing my A Levels at QEII High School, I decided to begin a new chapter studying for my undergraduate degree at Nottingham Trent University. With a slightly strange first couple of years at university (you guessed it... Covid!), I took the optional "sandwich year" to learn more about the application of conservation in real-life scenarios.

I was ecstatic when I found out that Manx Wildlife Trust would support me for the year. What initially attracted me the most to MWT was the small team, exciting projects and freedom to explore whatever interested me the most. As well as this, it would allow me to see the Island, which I thought I knew so well, in a completely new light. As MWT's first year-long Student Intern, I was in new territory; I didn't know what to expect and had to be open-minded.

The beauty of working in conservation in the Isle of Man is the wide range of biodiversity. I have improved my knowledge in upland, urban, coastal, freshwater, woodland, agricultural and wetland habitats. I admit that, as many people do, having grown up in the Isle of Man, I took the diversity for granted.

I am so grateful to have been involved in MWT's 50th year. This impressive milestone allowed for organisation-wide reflection on the past and future of MWT, allowing me to truly appreciate the work that has gone into protecting Manx wildlife and how brave people can make a huge impact. A fine example would be the Muckers – volunteers who care for the MWT reserves. Never have I met a lovelier group of positive, talented, and enthusiastic people. They taught me about dedication and loyalty, and I have a lot of respect for them. I hope to continue joining the group when I visit home as 'Once a Mucker, always a Mucker'!

One aim following MWT's 50th year was to increase public engagement levels. I saw the engagement team grow throughout the year and shine at events where I thoroughly enjoyed getting involved and stepping out of my comfort zone. A particular highlight was the infamous Festival of the Sea. Here, I spoke to members of the public about climate change and respecting sea life. Connecting with the visitors felt special as I could tell the information I was passing on was resonating with them.



Rachel helping out at Douglas Bee Friendly Day

What did I get up to?

The first stand-out project I have been involved in this year was a feasibility study into the reintroduction of freshwater pearl mussels. This endangered bivalve went extinct in the Isle of Man in the early 1900s for reasons unknown, and the project hopes to one day bring them back. I investigated the water quality patterns of all monitored rivers in the Island, writing a report about my findings. I included maps to display my data and recommendations for what needs to happen next.



Searching for freshwater pearl mussels

I have assisted with tree planting sessions and helped manage volunteers at the Hairpin Woodland Park, including the creation of the brand new 'Logstack Course'! I had a fantastic time building steps and balance beams, which made me feel more confident in my practical working abilities.



Tree planting at HWP with Andree, Hannah and Beth.

When I started with MWT, I soon realised that my knowledge of GIS (Geographic Information Systems – a mapping computer software) would benefit the team. Having learnt about the software in my second year at university, I was eager to put my skills into practice. I have been able to digitise maps from the archives, update maps of the reserves and help with planning permission forms. I even taught a couple of staff the basics!

Another project that I took the lead with was the annual carbon emission audit. I had to gather information on MWT's fuel consumption, waste, material use and the livestock we were responsible for. As a part of this project, I designed a comprehensive form for all staff members to fill out so that the data is easier to gather in the future and sent feedback on the ease of the process to the central Wildlife Trusts team.

What am I taking away?

Looking back on my year with MWT, I realise how much I have developed. My confidence has certainly grown, as has my knowledge of wildlife conservation, both in the field and behind the scenes. Being immersed in Manx wildlife has fuelled my desire to make positive change and helped me to develop a love for the complexity of ecology at a landscape scale. I am leaving my internship feeling motivated and inspired by the incredible team at Manx Wildlife Trust, and although I am still unsure of what my future looks like, I hope my journey leads back to them at some point down the line [we hope so too! - ed].



Fancy joining this motley (viking longboat) crew for a year as an intern? Email enquiries@mwt.im to find out about our intern programme.



The Calf of Man

Aron Sapsford, Bird Warden (Calf of Man)

Autumn 2022

The weather during the final few months of the 2022 season was rather challenging, with what seemed to be a never-ending procession of near gale to gale force winds making their way across the Irish Sea and battering the Calf of Man. Recording of the daily wind speed shows that October and November were two of the windiest months ever here and that the average wind speed has increased with each season since 2018. This trend is possibly a direct result of climate change and has a profound effect on the migration patterns of the birds that are recorded here, as well as species such as grey seals that breed around our coastline. This season we were joined by Lauren Stokes and Catrin Ferguson who arrived in early September to monitor the breeding seal population, which had a productive ‘pupping’ season producing 65 young.

Despite the often-inclement weather we were still treated to some ‘good’ birds, with a spotted crane in early September being a first record for the Calf, barred warbler and hobby mid-month and a sooty shearwater at the end of September. A yellow-browed warbler headed the cast in October, but perhaps most impressive was the ‘grounding’ of 8000 redwing & fieldfare on 19th.

We were again fortunate to be joined by a few volunteers including Phoebe Owen, Ellie Ames and Mike Haigh, as well as a small party from the Pembrokeshire ringing group, including ex-warden Bob Haycock who was making a nostalgic return to the Calf after some 44 years. With all their help we finished the season having ringed 8029 birds of 73 species – the 3rd highest total in the Observatory’s history.



Pembrokeshire RG & Volunteers - by Aron Sapsford

2023

The season began on 11th March, and we were soon in the swing of things with an arrival of several hundred goldcrests towards the end of the month. Palearctic spring migrants were beginning to arrive, when on 8th April an electrical fire in the generator building left us without any power and which necessitated a rather hurried close-down and temporary halt to the season. After a frustrating eight days and with the loan of a back-up generator from Manx Utilities, we were able to restart the season on 17th April and the remainder of spring passed by without any major issues. The Calf’s sixth ever little bunting, a singing male, gave a brief appearance on 6th May and then our attention turned more to the many breeding birds, and in particular the important seabird populations that can be found around the coastline of the Calf.

Overall breeding numbers and productivity appeared to be good, especially for the gulls and auks, whilst unfortunately a prolonged spell of strong easterly winds during April and early May resulted in another poor year for European shags.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Eider (pairs)	70 ¹	70 ¹	Unknown ⁶	70 ¹	87 ¹	72 ¹
Fulmar (AOS) ²	124	67	98 – 111	106	73	92
Manx Shearwater (AOS) ³	536	650	Unknown ⁴	950	1000 – 1200	Survey ongoing
European Shag (AON) ⁵	100	80	Unknown ⁴	102	107	90
Great Black-backed Gull (AON) ⁶	56	54	Unknown ⁴	55	66	70
Herring Gull (AON) ⁶	530	463	Unknown ⁴	702	508	689
Lesser Black-backed Gull (AON) ⁶	54	35	Unknown ⁴	25	38	45
Common Guillemot (IAS) ⁷	216	191	241	202	177	224
Razorbill (IAS) ⁷	183	179	227	178	154	171

Table1. Counts of breeding seabirds between 2018 – 2023. Units used are as follows: 1. Estimated total based on number of nests found and birds present, 2. Count of active nests located, 3. Apparently Occupied Site, 4. Apparently Occupied Burrow, 5. Apparently Occupied Nest, 6. No count due to Covid restrictions, 7. Count of Individual Adults.

Spring passage wasn’t quite finished, and we were treated to an exciting few days in early June, with a singing scarlett rosefinch, an unseasonal fieldfare, the Calf’s seventh ever marsh warbler and the Isle of Man’s second ever great reed warbler.

Great reed warbler - by Aron Sapsford



Catrin Ferguson returned to assist with the Manx shearwater burrow surveying, and we are grateful to The Seabird Group and the British Trust for Ornithology in providing sponsorship to help facilitate her stay here. As the colony continues to grow, having this additional help to continue and extend this important monitoring, on top of our already busy schedule of data collection, is invaluable. Catrin’s efforts were also rewarded in the finding of several ‘accessible’ burrows, which have allowed us to monitor several nests and record their development from egg through to the young departing on their first migration towards the Atlantic Ocean wintering grounds along the coastline of South America.



Catrin checking for occupied burrows - by Aron Sapsford



Manx shearwater chick about 10 days old - by Eleanor Grover

Manx shearwaters have a prolonged breeding season with the adults first coming ashore to claim their nesting burrows during March and April. A single egg is laid in May with an incubation period of around seven weeks. The young hatch in early July and are provisioned by both parents until they weigh around 600gms. The adults begin to depart in late August, leaving the young to continue growing for a few weeks until starvation drives the bird to take to the sea.



Manx shearwater chick about 14-21 days old



Manx shearwater chick about 5-6 weeks old



Manx shearwater chick about 8-9 weeks old

Engagement

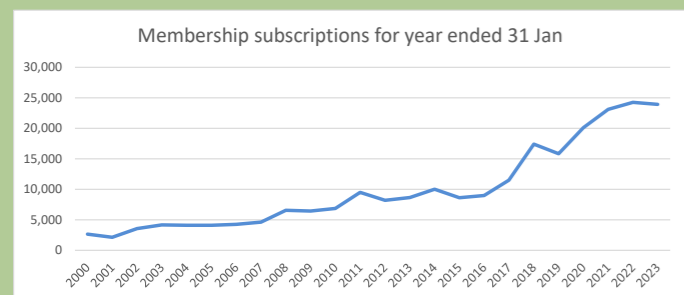
Graham Makepeace-Warne, Engagement Manager

I started last year's report with an apology for the magazine being late. Well this year - it's even later! Hopefully, reading this Annual Report, you may see why. There have been some big wins for nature during 22/23 and the momentum is still building! My highlight (see my face in the picture in Leigh's report) has to be the purchase of MWT Creg Y Cowin Nature Reserve with funds from Aviva as part of The Wildlife Trusts's (TWT) temperate rainforest restoration project. I don't normally get to be involved with land purchase projects that have such a direct win for nature. But, in this case, the project was driven by the availability of the funding.

I'm immensely proud of the Engagement Team that I have around me. I encourage you to read all their reports on the great work they are doing: Rey on our comms, Lucy on #TeamWilder, Hannah on community organising and Beth on education. I'm also looking forward to working more closely with our new Artist in Residence, Ali. They all work extremely hard for our Island's wildlife and generally more for the love of it than the wage. I would love to see conservation properly valued so that MWT are in a better position to improve this. Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) is drawing a focus on conservation for many companies and investors so there is hope.

Membership

For the first time since I started over five years ago, our membership dropped slightly at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. This was mirrored across the federation and is thought to be a result of the cost of living crisis. I'm pleased to say things are starting to improve again. However, we still struggle with members lapsing due to our clunky renewal process. Direct Debits are always best but it still remains a crux issue for us to get Paperless Direct Debits working on our website. If you think this is something you could help with, please do get in touch.



Corporate Members

As mentioned above, ESG is driving more interest in our Corporate Membership offer. Following Manx Telecom's sponsorship of MWT Cooldarry Nature Reserve, Utmost became our second reserve sponsor with MWT Onchan Community Wetlands. Appleby also came forward to sponsor the MWT Ayres Nature Discovery Centre which has enabled the volunteers to completely revamp the centre. It's well worth a re-visit next year if you haven't been for a while. Core funds remain a high priority for us and the annual donations from Island Escapes remain vitally important to our ability to run MWT successfully.

Marketing and PR

2022 saw TWT rebrand with a much modernised new logo. I'm pleased to say we were able to follow suit with our own Manx version using the little tern instead of the badger. It's a fresh new

look which will help portray MWT as a modern, forward thinking charity. Naturally it will take time for the new logo to filter through (I still see 'MNCT' (Manx Nature Conservation Trust) on some of our nature reserve gates) but both our vehicles and many reserves have already received new signage.

Climate Change

Thanks to our intern Rachel Smith we were able to once again complete a carbon account for 2021/22 and I'm pleased to say our carbon footprint has fallen slightly despite the growing team. MWT Creg Y Cowin Nature Reserve is our first carbon offsetting project which will see Aviva receiving carbon credits from the 28,000 trees we will be planting there with Isle of Man Woodland Trust - verified by TWT.



Harebells at MWT Creg Y Cowin Nature Reserve.

The image features in our 2024 calendar, available from the Peel Gift Shop

We are also close to launching our own carbon offsetting scheme brokered and audited by KPMG with three on-Island corporate funders purchasing carbon credits to help repay a green-loan for the land purchase and tree planting/management costs.

Appeals

The public's generosity never ceases to amaze me. At the end of 2022, the seal pupping season led to a number of rescues and subsequent rehabilitation. A quick appeal that December raised £10k for our new rehabilitation centre. This laid the foundation for our Marine Appeal which aims to raise £50k to help us deliver our all important marine conservation work. You can find out more and donate at: www.mwt.im/appeals/marine-appeal

Lucy and I had the opportunity to work closely with DEFA, UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man and Government Technology Services earlier this year to develop the Nature Recovery Network - see opposite. Using an idea originally from Surrey Wildlife Trust, we were able to develop a short survey that could link directly into the Government mapping portal. By answering simple questions on how gardens and office grounds etc are managed for wildlife, we can build a picture of all the wild spaces around the Island. Those scoring highly enough count towards our 30 by 30 (www.wildlifetrusts.org/30by30) targets. The best bit for us is that, for each question, there is a link to a how-to-guide which will help people on their journey to providing more habitat for wildlife. We've already had lots of submissions and I've been thrilled to see lovely photos of people's wildlife gardens and comments on how important these spaces are to them.



Manx Wildlife Trust
Treisht Bea-Feie
Vannin



How wild is your land?

Use our quick online tool to see how wildlife friendly your garden, office grounds, charity or trust land, school/college or youth club grounds, religious establishments, healthcare facilities or any other land is. Then add it to the Isle of Man's

Nature Recovery Network

Community

Hannah Phillips, Community Ranger



The role of Community Ranger, supported by Lloyds Bank International, commenced in May 2022. This position aims to engage more of the public with wildlife through the creation of community-led projects. This role is integral to the #TeamWilder campaign, launched by The Wildlife Trusts in 2021. The #TeamWilder campaign exemplifies the charities' shift towards engaging through a community organising approach, a central factor in The Wildlife Trusts' 2030 strategy. This change in mindset is a considerable shift, and we are still working towards introducing this new approach to more of our work.

Although #TeamWilder specifies community-led projects, a great deal of our work in community engagement also includes events and projects led by Manx Wildlife Trust. The quantity and diversity of these have grown throughout the year, with a selection described below.

MWT Onchan Community Wetlands

Excluding a period over summer, weekend work sessions have taken place bimonthly at MWT Onchan Community Wetlands since September 2022. Working alongside members of the local community, we have begun to remove two of the most prominent invasive plants at the reserve, creating space and light for other species.

The reserve has now been sponsored by Utmost International receiving a donation of £4,000. This generous donation will support the reserve's planned maintenance programme and will allow the existing community group to purchase vital tools and storage. The reserve is conveniently located in central Onchan and is approximately a ten minute walk from the Utmost International Office. As well as tools and storage, Utmost International's support will allow other maintenance plans to take place. These include extending and improving the existing boardwalk, updating the boundary fencing and providing seating and information boards. The site offers opportunity for engagement due to its proximity to a large number of people. Therefore, we hope the changes that we make, will benefit both wildlife and the local community.



From May 2022 to the end of September 2022	No.
Number of events led	28
Number of events involved in	19
Number of people attending events led	547
Number of collaborations with Island media	7
Meetings with different Commissioners	5
Followers on social media platforms	452

Milntown Gardening Club

The Milntown Gardening Club began in February 2023 and takes place every Tuesday morning. This collaborative project between Milntown Estate and Manx Wildlife Trust promotes community and wildlife gardening, celebrating the many benefits that these can have. The club is open to everyone, whether beginner or expert. This encourages learning and sharing knowledge, one of the joys of community gardening. Prior to the end of term, four students studying Foundation Learning at UCM were also members of the club. The range in age and background at the club clearly demonstrated the benefits in intergenerational community gardening.

Most sessions are focused within the Milntown vegetable patch; however, the club has also paid visits to Manx Bird Life's Point of Ayre National Reserve and Joe Cant's Manx Vineyard. Both trips had a wildlife focus, with Joe explaining how he grows his produce with wildlife in mind.

Working with the Island's Churches

The Island's churches provide both vital community hubs as well as important potential wildlife havens. Therefore, it was great to be contacted by Friends of Ballaugh Old Church sharing their desire to improve their church's grounds for wildlife. Since then, the beautiful old church has hosted a number of community events helping to engage and educate about the church's wildlife. Grass has been left long, bird boxes have been built and there are many more plans ahead! The group have also reached out to other churches around the Island, with the exciting aim of creating a wilder church network.

Friends of Ballaugh Old Church are currently organising a number of wildlife themed autumn and winter talks, follow their page on Facebook to learn more.

Events

Events are a significant part of our work in community engagement and are an important way of sharing our work with a new audience. This summer, we organised our first Team Wilder on Tour. This series of events involved us visiting several of the Island's parks with crafts, games and a bell tent. The tour gave us an opportunity to speak to people about their community and local wildlife, as well as to introduce Tappee, our new member of the team! We have also started creating a community quilt from people's fabric paintings. We asked to see your favourite types of wildlife and we're excited to put them all together soon!

Digital Communications

Rachael Harrop, Communications Officer

1st Feb 2022 to 31st Jan 2023

Facebook

increased by 770 likes to 11,043
reached 300,977 people
had 710 posts, shares and stories

Twitter

increased by 357 followers to 6,806
had 808 tweets retweeted
had 302,500 tweet impressions
had 456 tweets

Instagram

increased by 204 followers to 2,979
reached 20,099 people
had 401 posts

Website

had 87K users
had 146,467 individual page views
had a bounce rate of 72.9% (percentage of people only viewing 1 page)

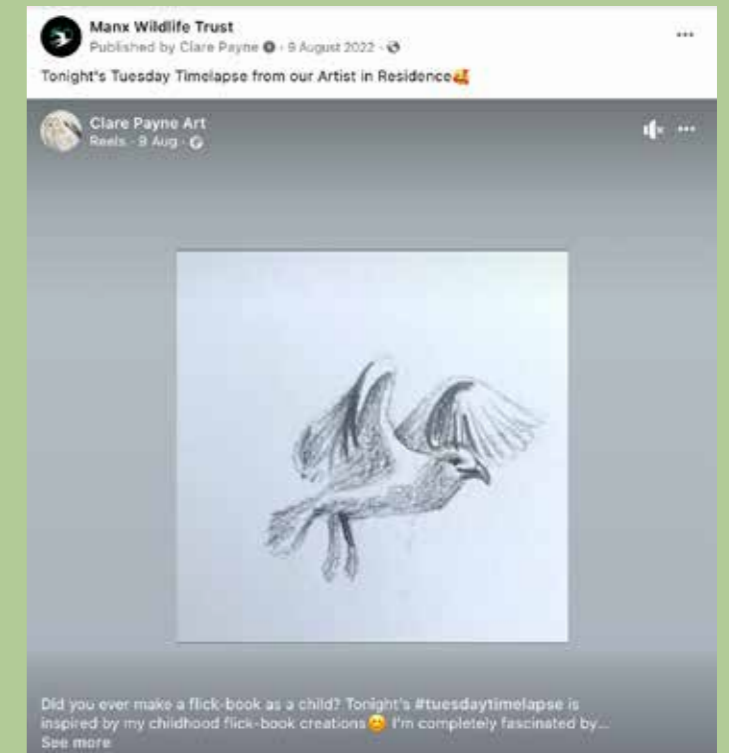
2022-2023 was again a busy year for the MWT socials:

- We had a fantastic feature from MWT Reserves Manager, Tricia Sayle. Throughout the spring and summer months we had "Plant of the day" showcasing the different plants, from common to rare, that people could look out for and spot whilst they were out and about.



- For the winter months we moved from 'Plant of the Day' to 'Minibeast Mondays' where MWT Education Officer, Dawn Colley, showcased a different invertebrate species each week, including pictures and the fascinating facts that surround them.

- Clare Payne, MWT's Artist in Residence for 2022-2023 also had a busy year, with monthly 'Painting in your PJs' sessions where the public could join in live and paint along on Sunday mornings. Clare also did 'Timelapse Tuesdays', little videos that contained a timelapse of her painting a Manx species.



Some of our top socials included:

- A thank you to the Southern Neighbourhood Police for helping MWT Seal Sitters protect a juvenile seal on Port Erin beach, allowing it to rest after a stormy night



- MWT conducted the first wallaby drone survey in the Ballaugh curragh in a windy spell in January
- The launch of River Buddies, with DEFA and Beach Buddies
- Over 50 years ago the last known Field Rose (*Rosa arvensis*) on the Isle of Man died. It was always rare here as we are on the edge of its global distribution. During summer 2022 MWT found what looked like a field rose and, after genetic testing, it was discovered it was a hybrid, half field rose, half dog rose, which makes it half extinct?

Arachnophilia

Spiders and harvestmen on MWT reserves 2018 – 2022

Kate Hawkins, Volunteer



Reserves Visited:

- MWT Close Sartfield (2018, 2019, 2022)
- MWT Dalby Mountain (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)
- MWT Barnell Reservoir (2018, 2019)
- MWT Dobbies Meadow (2018, 2019)
- MWT Cooldarry (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- MWT Cronk y Bing (2018, 2019)
- MWT Goshen (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- MWT Aust (2020, 2021, 2022)
- MWT Close e Quayle (2020, 2021, 2022)
- MWT Ballachrink (2020, 2021, 2022)
- MWT Close Umpson (2021)
- MWT Ballamoar Meadow (2021)
- MWT Ballachurry (2021)
- MWT Dalby Mountain Fields (2022)

In 2018, with the agreement and encouragement of Manx Wildlife Trust, I started investigating the spiders and their arachnid cousins the harvestmen in MWT reserves. The intention was to build species inventories of these groups for the reserve records and to highlight any noteworthy species and habitats that might need protection and adjustments to management. Reserves Manager Tricia Sayle and I formed a plan to target six reserves initially, with me visiting each reserve two or three times a year to record observations and collect specimens for identification. With this approach, we hoped to get a reasonable idea of the arachnid fauna of the different habitats covered. We have applied this regime every year, visiting some of the larger reserves over two or three years and replacing the smaller reserves with new target sites.

Spiders and harvestmen are important in the food chain both as predators of invertebrates and as prey for birds and mammals. Harvestmen also feed on decaying plant matter and carrion so are useful in recycling nutrients. Much as I like and admire these critters, there are many species which are very small and can only be identified by close examination under a microscope. Even closely related larger species are often separable only by small differences in certain anatomical features. This means it is often necessary to collect specimens, to identify the species in the first place and to provide 'proof' of the correct identification. Only by documenting species diversity, recognising unusual, sparsely distributed or specialised species and providing the material evidence for those findings can we work out the most appropriate conservation measures.

Summary of findings

Of the 670 currently known species of spiders on the British Isles list, some 239 species have been recorded so far from the Isle of Man. Information from the Recorder 6 database (held and managed by MWT) shows that most records of spiders were collected in the 1980s and 1990s when Jim Wright and John Dalingwater made a

series of visits to the Island to run identification courses and build the Isle of Man checklist. Of the harvestmen, 15 species have been recorded in the Isle of Man, out of a total of 33 species on the British Isles list.

My focus on MWT reserves from 2018 to 2022 updated site species lists and added a few new species to the Isle of Man checklist. All findings have been sent to Tricia Sayle for her records and management plans, to the Recorder 6 database manager and to the British Arachnological Society's Spider and Harvestmen Recording Schemes (to put the Isle of Man on the map!) Specimens have been deposited in the Manx Museum as part of the reference collection.

Spiders on MWT Reserves:

Number of reserves visited 2018 – 2022: 14

Number of species of spiders recorded: 124 (out of 239 species currently on the Manx list)

Number of species of harvestmen recorded: 14 (out of 15 species currently on the Manx list)

New species for Isle of Man recorded from MWT reserves: 8 spiders, 1 harvestman

It is difficult to compare reserves in terms of species richness because visits took place at different times of year and for varying lengths of time. However, MWT Dalby Mountain, MWT Close Sartfield, MWT Cooldarry, MWT Close e Quayle and MWT Aust yielded good numbers of species, possibly because a range of habitats were sampled on the same sites or because sampling took place in distinctive long established and relatively undisturbed habitats, such as deciduous woodland at MWT Cooldarry and wet heath at MWT Dalby Mountain. Most spiders collected were small or very small, often only 1-3 mm, including most of the new species for the Isle of Man. They were often in cryptic habitats such as grass tussocks which take a while to search. It seems likely that more species will be discovered if the reserve visits continue.



A tiny tree bark-dwelling spider (*Drapetisca socialis*) from the large family of money spiders (Linyphiidae). Recorded at MWT Close-e-Quayle. © P. R. Harvey.



A wolf spider (*Alopecosa pulverulenta*). Ground-hunting spider, usually found running over warm ground as in MWT Close Sartfield. © P. R. Harvey.



Cucumber Spider (*Araniella cucurbitina*), female with egg sac. An orb web-weaving species found in trees and bushes, such as at Aust. © P. R. Harvey.



One of the longest legged harvestmen (*Leibobunum* species). Clammers over low vegetation and bushes in search of fruit, fungi and small insects. © Sheila Norris.



Nursery Web Spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*), encountered in long grass where females build tent-like webs to protect their eggs and hatchlings. © Sheila Norris.

BACKGROUND IMAGE: DAWN COLLEY

Annual Report 2023

The past year has seen the opening of a tiny nature reserve and our largest. The launch of 'Action for Wildlife' will help cement the recovery of dozens of our most critically endangered species and we are now less than 12 months from the opening of our flagship engagement reserve at the Hairpin. We are setting up for a bigger year next year too.

Our New Small Nature Reserve.

MWT Billown Nature Reserve was opened on 16th June. At less than seven acres it is not large, but it is very special. Created on old limestone quarries and including Rosehill Quarry ASSI it is the largest inland species-rich limestone habitat on the Island. Over 30 rare plants occur in this reserve from the beautiful 'bee orchid' to the insignificant (but found nowhere else on the Island) 'flat meadow-grass'. A week after we opened the nature reserve, we released six very wild young Loughtan sheep to graze it. They have led us a merry chase as they are escape artists and champion hide and seek players, but will be essential to the future of the reserve by browsing the scrub and removing the rank grasses.

Our Biggest Reserve

Last November we got confirmation that Aviva, the UK insurance company, was investing tens of millions of pounds in new temperate rainforests around the British Isles. Along with Ulster, Cornwall, Devon, Cumbria and the Welsh Wildlife Trusts, MWT was eligible. We jumped on the chance to purchase Creg-y-Cowin a 105 acre farm in East Baldwin, one of the wettest parts of the Island. We are working in partnership with The Isle of Man Woodland Trust to spend the next five years planting this as a new temperate rainforest and there is some hard work ahead of us. One day it will be an oak-dominated woodland grazed by cattle

and full of the mosses, ferns and lichens of a temperate rainforest, but even in five years the birch nurse trees will be above head-height and it will feel more like a woodland than a farm.

105 acres of woodland is enough to get lost in, but it is still not 'landscape scale' - the scale we need to work at to get profound nature recovery. Temperate rainforest is a perfect strategy for large-scale nature recovery. The best land for Manx rainforests is rain-soaked ground between the uplands and lowlands, where large areas of bracken, gorse and lower value habitat occur. It is also where sheep farming is concentrated, and planting trees to create woodland pasture will help make farming here more resilient to climate change, better for nature and sequester lots of carbon. MWT's rainforest journey has truly begun this year, but we now need a roadmap to landscape scale.

Hairpin Woodland Park

Scheduled to open in 2024, there is still lots to do, but we have completed the children's play elements and the conversion of the conifer plantations to native woodlands has progressed this year. The building of a car-park, an interpretation area, full waymarking and the purchase and planting of additional land all now needs to happen in the next nine months. The challenge is on.

Resourcing

Investment in these conservation efforts has taken a jump from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of pounds in one year. If I look back ten years ago, I would command a budget of just a few hundred pounds. We need to meet the biodiversity challenge and the climate challenge, and it is timely that the resources needed are rising to the ambitions of MWT.

Volunteer work party at MWT Creg y Cowin Nature Reserve - by Saskia Beresford



Action for Wildlife

Andree Dubbeldam, Conservation Officer

Education

Beth Penhallurick, Education Officer
May 2023 to August 2023



Number of children engaged	973
School sessions run	21
Watch events run	11
Rock Pooling sessions run	13
Total number of sessions/ events run	46
#WatchWednesday Social Media Posts	9

I arrived in the Isle of Man at the end of April excited to continue the delivery of MWT Education. Thanks to the support of DESC and DEFA, in my first few months I have been able to deliver 21 school sessions, 11 Watch events and numerous other public events.

Schools

As we move into the new academic year, MWT have developed a new education strategy to provide more digital resources for teachers and streamline our delivery of in-person lessons. This strategy aims to access more students at more schools, as we see wildlife education as an entitlement of all Manx schoolchildren. We aim to provide core education sessions for Primary, Secondary and A-level with additional resources for teachers to access before and after our engagement.

The end of the previous academic year brought a sunny June where schools were able to engage with wildlife up close. We provided school sessions which saw children become plant detectives, bug hunters and bird watchers. However, the most popular session was rock pooling with 13 sessions delivered over the summer months. Every session looked slightly different with some classes focusing on the diverse range of seaweeds on our shores and others interested in coastal habitats for Manx marine life. We even provided a rock pooling session for 53 children from Sulby Primary School where the Year Six pupils supported the reception children to complete part of the Lieutenant Governor's Award Scheme.

Accessibility

A personal highlight was meeting Evie from Ballakermeen High School and chatting on her podcast 'Talking in the Dark'. Evie was born with bilateral anophthalmia and uses her podcast to raise awareness about visual impairments, among other disabilities. By talking on the podcast about wildlife education, it highlighted the need to have a greater consideration for the accessibility of our events.

It was also a delight to have Evie at our Festival of the Sea event where our marine experts rose to the challenge of describing the appearance of a variety of marine critters and creating a more accessible experience. This is just the start of a movement to make our events more accessible for all, but we are looking forward to helping people engage with wildlife in new and exciting ways.

Watch Group

The Wildlife Watch sessions are part of our junior membership for 4-12-year-olds which usually meet once a month. However, throughout the school summer holidays we have offered 9 Watch sessions including 'Beautiful Butterflies', 'Woodland Bear Hunt' and 'Stream Dipping'. Our 'Sensory Trail' event was also a hit (despite the torrential rain!) and something we intend to develop further as part of a wildlife wellbeing movement. Watch is all about giving children the opportunity to experience the amazing Manx wildlife first hand and having lots of fun along the way! Watch out for our upcoming monthly events!

Peatland Survey & Restoration

Sarah Hickey, Conservation Officer (Manx Mires)

Peat Survey

During 2022 and 2023, much of my time with MWT has been as an ecological consultant, with the occasional trek into the hills for peatland survey work. I've been lucky enough to have help from volunteer surveyors, who have greatly contributed to our knowledge of the extent and depth of peat cover in the Island.

Peat Depth Areas by Category		
Peat Depth Category	Area (hectares)	
	2022	2023
Deep Peat >99cm	203	226
Peat 40 -99cm	1763	1851
Shallow Peat <40cm	2993	3652
No Peat	31	151
Total Area Surveyed	4990	5880

The survey of upland peat has been broadened to include lowland peat, with the aim of producing a complete map of Manx peatlands over the next few years. With the valuable help of volunteers, we have now surveyed 5,880 hectares of potential peatland, which will inform future land management and restoration plans as well as give a better understanding of carbon sequestration, storage and emissions in peatland areas.

MWT nature reserves that could contain peat were also identified and surveyed. This provided some interesting results, with peat up to 2m deep in the Ballaugh Curragh reserves (Goshen, Close Umpson and Close Sartfield) and over 3m deep at Lough Cranstal. Other reserves with a significant depth of peat include Close-e-Quayle, Moaney & Crawny's Meadows, Dalby Mountain and Dalby Mountain Fields.

Over the last year, detailed surveys were undertaken at North Barrule, Beinn-y-Phott South and the Rheast and restoration plans drawn up. These take into account peat depth, erosion features, habitat condition and archaeological features. Sites have been selected for restoration depending on the depth of peat, level of erosion and potential for restoration work to be undertaken.

Restoration Work

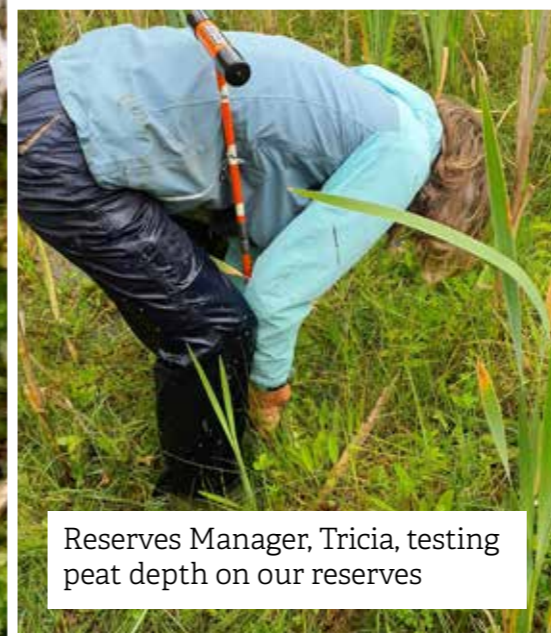
The pilot restoration area at Turbary Bank has been successful, with many of the re-profiled hags showing good establishment of vegetation. Coir netting was trialled at

this site, holding down heather brush on an area devoid of vegetation. It has successfully enabled the establishment of vegetation by providing a sheltered environment and will be used in future restoration work. Following the re-profiling work, we also trialled planting sphagnum moss into areas of bare peat. We planted some sphagnum samples from a company called Beadamoss, who specialise in growing sphagnum for peatland restoration projects. We also tried planting sphagnum taken from within the site – we are fortunate that a lot of our planned restoration sites contain plenty of sphagnum, unlike many sites in the UK where it has been lost due to atmospheric pollution. The sphagnum was planted amongst heather brush in order to give it some protection from wind and rain and on a recent check it was growing well. Our trial of re-profiling peat hags by hand was not so successful! It is extremely hard work and probably only suitable for tiny hags.

Peatland Restoration Sites		
Restoration Site	Area (hectares)	Surveyed
Turbary Bank	8	Yes
Clagh Ouyr Base	9	Yes
Snaefell Footpath	18	Yes
Black Hut	3	Yes
Mullagh Ouyr	12	Yes
Beinn-y-Phott North	46	No
Beinn-y-Phott South	7	Yes
The Rheast	132	Yes
Glen Auldyn Bog	109	No
North Barrule	141	Yes
Sulby River Head	45	No
Total	529	438

Peatland Partnership

I have recently started a new role as Peatland and Upland Carbon Officer with DEFA. Part of this role is to form a Manx Peatland Partnership with stakeholder groups, one of which is Manx Wildlife Trust. Through this partnership work we aim to deliver survey and restoration work as well as raising public awareness of the importance of peatlands and how we can protect them. With more time now dedicated to the project, we hope to see real progress in peatland restoration over the next couple of years.



Reserves Manager, Tricia, testing peat depth on our reserves



Restoration work: planting sphagnum moss on degraded peatland

Sphagnum moss and sundew on a disused farm track



It's time to book your autumn or winter staycation!







For a great choice of inspected and graded quality holiday cottages in beautiful coastal, countryside and village locations.

Book your perfect Island Escapes staycation securely online today

Visit www.islandescapes.im



@ISLANDESCAPESIM



Get £25 OFF your stay when you use promo code IOM25



Manx
Wildlife Trust
Treisht Bea-Feie
Vannin



BACKGROUND IMAGE: GETHAM MAKEPEACE-AWARINE

Manx Wildlife Trust
7-8 Market Place, Peel, Isle of Man IM5 1AB
01624 844432 | www.mwt.im | enquiries@mwt.im
Reg. Charity 225 IOM | Reg. Company 5297 IOM

