



Annual Report

2020-2021

Welcome to our first Manx Nature Annual Report! Since being established in 1973, MWT has led the way on delivering an astounding amount of wildlife conservation in the Isle of Man. Despite all we have achieved in almost 50 years, however, the need for MWT remains as strong as ever, and our aim is that this Annual Report will enable us to better communicate the work we are doing and the positive impact we are having, both on and off Island. We need our work to be better understood by politicians, partners, funders, and all of our IOM residents and visitors, and by doing this we will hopefully inspire more people to get involved with, and/or support our work.

Although MWT is one of the smallest of The Wildlife Trusts (TWT), we are one of only three who have coverage across a whole nation (Scotland and Ulster being the others) and with our strategically important position at the centre of the British Isles and Irish Sea, we have a key role to play. As we face the challenges of climate change, and the development and industrialisation of the Irish Sea, the data we collect will be valuable to a far wider audience. We also have a great opportunity to develop whole nation approaches to (for example) climate change mitigation and Agri-environment initiatives, which could potentially become models for other small nations and islands.

Partnerships are critical for MWT as we aim to increase our impact, and several of these are highlighted in this report. We have an excellent relationship with the IOM Government (we see ourselves as a friend and ally, but one also willing to challenge when needed), particularly with DEFA, who we work with closely on several important wildlife and wider environmental initiatives. Our alliances with Manx National Heritage, the Manx National Farmers Union and other conservation organisations are highly valued and offer excellent opportunities for greater combined impact.

This report contains articles by several of our team. Our nature reserves remain at the heart of what MWT delivers and it is fantastic to see the data for the

number of hours contributed by our volunteers, the Midweek Muckers. Lara's article covers several areas of our marine (and now freshwater) work, including the data from the seal pupping annual surveys, shark tagging and our new role as the IOM Seasearch coordinators. The data from Aron for the Calf Bird Observatory, and from our partner Manx Whale and Dolphin watch, give a wider marine perspective. On the terrestrial front, Andree's report touches on several projects including the work we are doing at Ramsey Hairpin, Sarah covers our important peat restoration project, and David highlights the great opportunity we have to positively influence nature across 88% of the IOM, as delivery partner for the IOM Government's new Agri-Environment Scheme,

Communicating our work and our key messages is fundamentally important for MWT, and the pieces by Graham and Rachael summarise how we have significantly developed our engagement and outreach over the period. The paper from our (Biosphere Award winning!) Education Officer Dawn describes the size and breadth of the audience that she connects with in the IOM.

We hope you find our first annual report a useful reference document and our aim is that the report will evolve in the years ahead.

Leigh Morris, CEO



Background image: Puffin at Kione ny Halby by Keirron Tastagh



CEO's Report (1st Feb 2020 to 31st Jan 2021)

Leigh Morris

I joined MWT in January 2020 just two weeks before the start of the 2020-21 reporting year, so this report covers my first 12 months in post, which was an interesting, unusual, and I believe progressive year for MWT. COVID-19 was dramatic for us all, but we thankfully received financial support from IOM Govt & Manx Lottery Trust, and our team developed their remote working culture and digital skills.

the online platform Zoom, and our new strategy is now used as the driver for all MWT deliver. After developing the strategy, we established our new committee structure and recruited eight excellent new Trustees to join our Council. A new culture of staff team meetings was instigated in early 2020, a Staff Appraisal & Development Scheme was launched, an MWT Group Pension Scheme has been set up and our first Staff Away Day took place:



Strategy, Governance and Team Development:

A series of strategy workshops were held during May 2020, via



Rachael Harrop (Rey) joined the team as our Communications Assistant, and Rachel Hartnoll retired as our Gift Shop Manager in February 2021 – and she is greatly missed!

Partnership Working:

For MWT to achieve our ambitions it is vital that we work positively with others. From early on in my tenure I have set out to foster collaborative links, including signing Memorandums of Understanding with Manx National Farmers Union:



Manx National Heritage (MNH):



and others. I am delighted that we have received funding from the Curragh's Wildlife Park Conservation Fund to support our work on the Calf, and that we helped initiate the set-up of a new IOM Environmental Educators Group. Beyond the IOM, the MWT Chair and myself participated in several on-line working groups with The Wildlife Trust (TWT) leaders, and MWT are now an active member of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, an umbrella body linking all the conservation organisations in UKOTs and Crown Dependencies.

Engagement & Engagement:

A key priority this year was to build our connections and increase our visible presence in the Island. Graham and Rey's reports provide the detail, but two notable landmarks are our new website with an .im URL and the agreement to evolve our Visitor Centres into Nature Discovery Centres. We also made the decision to strongly champion the IOM status as a UNESCO Biosphere, which we regard as being critically important, and we aim to do our part to ensure it is a success and sustains. The coordination of our volunteers was carried out part-time by Sarah, who produced an up-to-date spreadsheet of volunteers, a generic Volunteers Handbook, launched a newsletter, established Volunteer Leaders meetings, and reintroduced a generic MWT Awards Scheme to recognise outstanding achievement:



Our education contract with IOM Government (DESC and DEFA) was extended for another year, and during lockdown Dawn created a series of films made available online for home schooling. We commenced the development of an adult education programme and launched three new courses for delivery as pilots in 2021: Wildlife Gardening, Wildlife Observer and Magnificent Meadows, with an excellent response.

Conservation Work:

Our MWT nature reserves looked after by Tricia are the core of our conservation work, and I enjoyed visiting all 25 early in 2020. The focus for our wider terrestrial work is the Ramsey Forest Project, Action for Wildlife, Wildlife Sites, peat restoration and the new Agri-Environment Scheme. Within marine I am delighted that we are part of the new TWT Irish Sea Group, that we have taken on the role of Seasearch Coordinators for the IOM and have commenced externally funded seagrass projects and freshwater mussel research. The management of the Calf of Man Bird Observatory for MNH remains an important partnership for us. MWT have been delighted to lead the development of a Calf Research Strategy for MNH, and we have greatly increased our own communications on the work of the Bird Observatory to ensure a greater audience is aware of what an important place this is:



Our ecological consultancy work has expanded significantly this year, due to two factors. Firstly, consultancy has become a stronger focus for us to help ensure that Manx projects receive appropriate Manx ecology advice. Secondly, COVID prevented organisations in the IOM from employing ecological consultants from the UK. MWT have filled this gap and we aim to maintain this level of delivery.

Overall:

Reflecting on my first year in the IOM, I am delighted at our progression during the period, with important new conservation projects and several steps to get our core structure and operating systems now looking far more solid. I wish to thank all the MWT team (staff and volunteers) who responded and adapted so well, not only to a new CEO (and my new ideas) but also to the pandemic which made the whole year far more challenging. Well done all.

Reserves

Tricia Sayle, Reserves Officer

2020 Highlights

- Hand clearing 5 of the 6 meadows at Close Sartfield
- Speckled bush-cricket (*Leptophyes punctatissima*) recorded at Close e Quayle
- Recording Isle of Man cabbage (*Coincya monensis subsp. monensis*) at Cronk y Bing
- Fencing the east block of Goshen

The spring and early summer of 2020 was warm/hot and dry, and then it was often very wet resulting in difficult ground conditions. A high-water table prevented some annual work, such as hay making from taking place on some sites. Much of the late summer/early autumn was spent hand cutting and clearing areas of grassland, particularly at Close Sartfield, which delayed the start of autumn/winter clearance on some sites. September to March is the main period during which most practical work takes place to avoid disturbing nesting birds and plants in flower. Some sites had not seen completion of annual clearance work by the end of the year but there was still a window of opportunity in the new year. Lockdowns in January and March/April 2021 meant some scheduled work was delayed.

Most of the reserves have been managed for some years now and the majority of the work which is undertaken is maintenance of what has been achieved and part of a well-established, long-term plan. Autumn/winter fenceline clearance and ditching is followed by bracken and invasive weed control which in turn is followed by the raking season, hand cutting and clearing of awkward areas – repeat. Every once in a while, something new comes along to add a bit of variety such as constructing/repairing fences, installing new gates, coppicing and making wattle. February 2022 will see the resumption of coppicing at Close Sartfield so the Muckers will be honing their wattle-making skills. These have proved very popular in the past so get your orders in now.



Anita & Geoff Dean by Tricia Sayle

Thanks to the continuing generous financial support of Nedbank Private Wealth, much of the regrowing gorse at Glen Dhoo was topped in late autumn 2020 by a contractor. Later, a small group of staff gave up their Saturday morning to help with some practical work on site. Nedbank staff have been volunteering at Glen Dhoo since 2015 and whilst some of the work has been new projects such as tree planting and fencing, latterly they have undertaken routine annual tasks such as fenceline clearance which is vital to the long-term management of the site. It is hoped Nedbank staff will return in the autumn.

The research by our five local naturalists has continued, building on our knowledge of the flies, spiders, moths, fungi and birds for Cooldarry, Dalby Mountain, Close e Quayle, Aust, Ballachrink and Goshen. 2020 yielded several new records for the Island including 11 flies and 2 spiders, and the invertebrate highlight of the Speckled Bush Cricket at Close e Quayle. Efforts are underway to try and establish whether this was a one off or whether the cricket has a more widespread distribution than thought. These are protected under the Wildlife Act, 1990 and there are only a few records for it on the Island, mainly from the Glen Chass area.



Large emerald moth by Pete Hadfield

Botanical recording continued as usual this summer on many of the reserves, and I am indebted to Amber Cordwell who joined me on several of these visits for her expertise and passion for wildflowers.

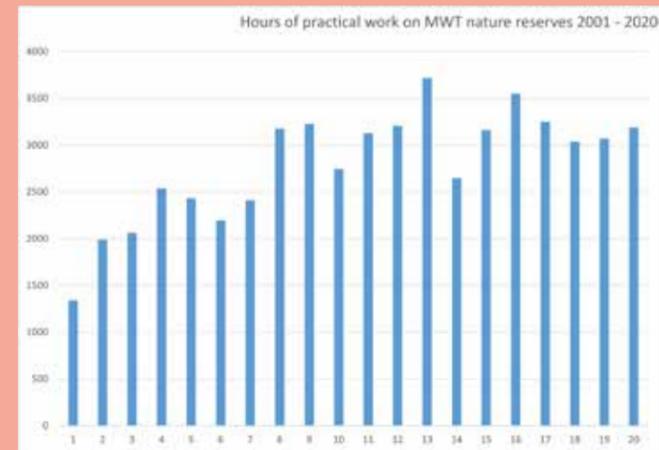
2021 Highlights

- The Isle of Man cabbage (*Rhynchosinapis monensis*), at Cronk y Bing, together with around 1,352 pyramidal orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)
- Cranberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) thriving on Dalby
- Discovering the ivy-leaved bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) is still present at Close Sartfield and that the yellow bartsia (*Parentucellia viscosa*) has spread
- Recording yellow bartsia at Moaney and Crawyn's Meadows after an absence of 11 years
- A spread of adder's-tongue fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) at Fell's Field and Close Sartfield

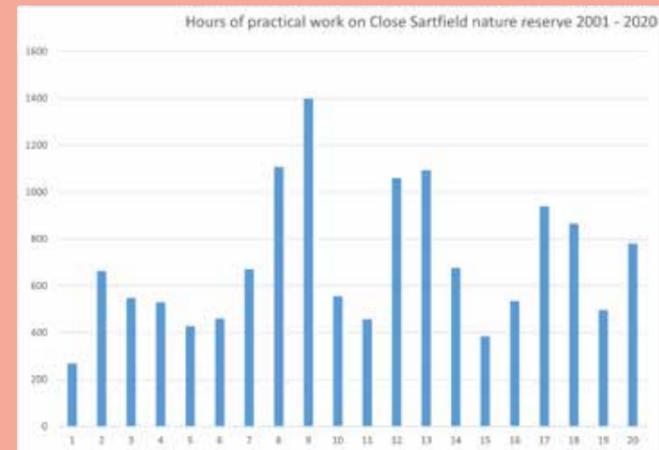
- An increase in common twayblade orchid (*Listera ovata*) at Ballamooar Meadow and Close e Quayle
- A flourishing population of wood speedwell (*Veronica montana*) at Ballachrink
- Seven greater butterfly orchids (*Platanthera chlorantha*) at Close Sartfield

Due to the adverse weather and resulting ground conditions, Goshen was not cut for hay in either 2019 or 2020. However, grazing did take place across the reserve last winter, allowing a good show of orchids this summer. The reduction in uncontrolled grazing of the "east block" by wallabies thanks to the new fencing, significantly increased both the diversity and quantity of growth on these meadows.

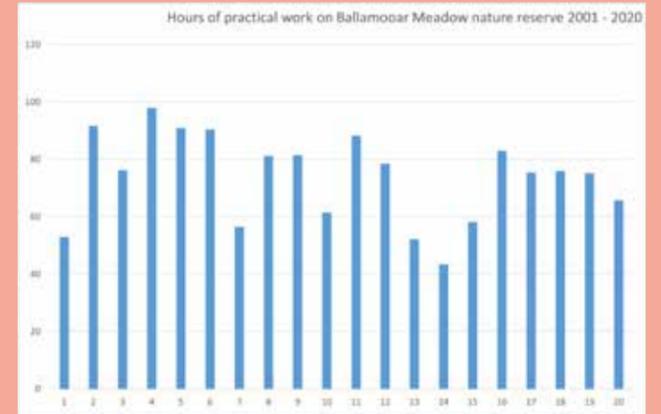
3,289 hours were spent on practical work on the reserves in 2020, primarily undertaken by me and The Muckers, but includes some contractor time too. This time does not include site visits, surveys, time taken to get to and from sites or the paperwork and liaison involved with every site. Almost one third of the time was spent at Goshen undertaking the fencing necessary to allow grazing and made possible by a generous donation. Together, Goshen, Close Sartfield, Glen Dhoo and Ballachrink make up 71% of the total.



The peak in 2013 is attributable to a significant increase in the hours at Cooldarry due to the clear-up operation following a snow storm in March and the ensuing repairs to the numerous access features. The peak in 2016 is in part due to having to cut and clear one of the meadows at Close e Quayle by hand.



2008 and 2009 represent years where we did coppicing and the work at the hide to reinstate a more open bog habitat. 2012/2013 and 2017/2018, were years when we did coppicing. 2020 was the year of the hand cutting and raking.



Ballamooar Meadow is a site where the management regime has been consistent for many years so there is little change in the amount of time spent on site.

The Muckers continue to be incredibly hard working and enthusiastic for the reserves, and their efforts are very much appreciated. Throughout 2020, there were on average 20 volunteers out each Thursday and 9 on Tuesdays. Several volunteers come out both days and stay 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 dedication 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 have helped on the reserves in whatever capacity.



Peter Shimmin saving an all too literal 'Mucker' by Alison Skyner

Marine

Dr Lara Howe, Marine Officer
and Clare Rogerson, Marine Conservation Assistant

Puffins on the Calf of Man

MWT are pleased to confirm puffins were seen on the Calf in July. Local kayaker Keirron Tastagh captured the moment where a puffin was seen snuggling up to one of the decoys. The following day Rob Fisher, the assistant bird warden, spotted a puffin with nesting material in its beak, a sure sign that breeding is being attempted. Puffins were then seen off the Kione ny Halby for the remainder of the summer. We can't yet confirm if they bred successfully or not but watch this space.



KEIRRON TASTAGH

Confirmed new seagrass zone

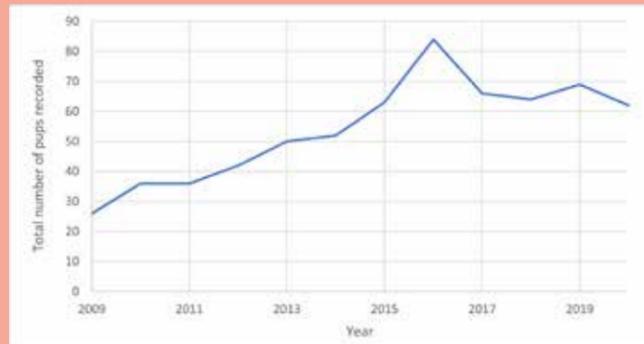
Many years ago it was reported that seagrass had been seen at Bulgham bay but had never been confirmed. This year MWT and Seasearch divers headed out to investigate. The 3 teams did identify seagrass in the area, in fact a dense bed with lots of life, from burrowing anemones to hermit crabs, egg cases on the leaves of the seagrass and various crab species. A wonderfully diverse site showcasing the wonders of seagrass. MWT will now lobby Government to protect this site in line with the other seagrass zones within the marine nature reserves.

Seagrass samples for DNA analysis

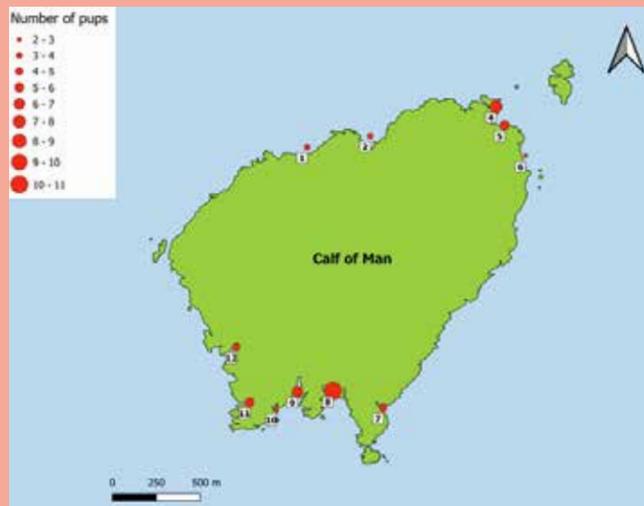
Seagrass samples have been collected for DNA analysis as part of a wide Great British project with Project Seagrass to look at potential genetic differences between meadows. Our samples are yet to be processed but watch this space.

Seals on the Calf of Man

Surveys began in 2009 on the Calf to monitor the pup births and record the adults using the Calf at that time, via photo-identification of spot patterns. As apex predators seals form an important role in maintaining the ecosystem balance so monitoring seal populations and reproduction can indicate the health of the ecosystem as a whole. Generally pup numbers have increased since the surveys began and now appear to be stabilising.



Graph showing the trends in seal pup production from 2009 – 2020, data collected by a range of volunteers during the annual Manx Wildlife Trust seal pupping surveys on the Calf of Man.



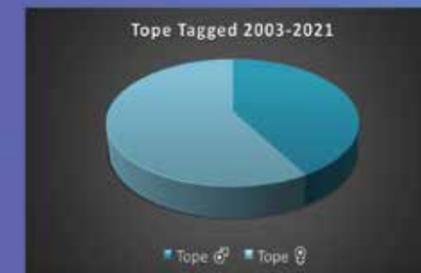
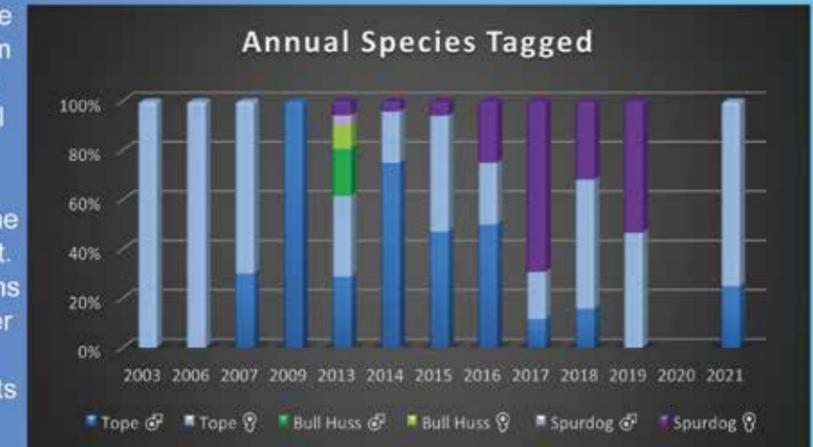
Map showing the distribution of pups around the Calf of Man in the 2020 pupping season, produced using QGIS software. The relative size of the red dot corresponds to the number of pups born at this location.

The seals clearly have their favourite places to pup as can be seen from the map. These are generally gently sloping cobbled beaches where there is room for the pups to move above high water when the tide comes in. The lack of seals along the east and west coasts reflects the steep cliffs on either side that don't even provide a haul out site for the adults.

The photo ID work has enabled us to identify individuals and provides insight into their behaviours. Many return year after year, with the odd seal being seen every year since the surveys began to new individuals coming to the Calf. Also some seals returning to the same beach each year to pup. It has also allowed us to make a connection most recently with Cornwall Seal Research Group where one of our seals from our catalogue was identified in Cornwall as well. Just goes to show how mobile these species really are. Seal surveys are currently underway on the Calf for this year, so look out for more information through our social media.

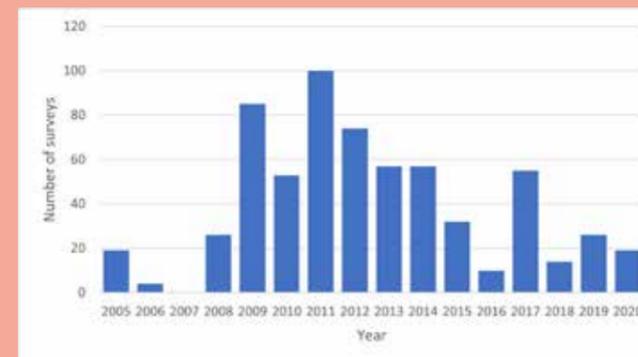
Small Shark Tagging Project

The data we obtain from the Manx Wildlife Trust "catch and release" tagging program provides much needed information about the numbers and distribution of Tope, Bull Huss and Spurdog in Manx waters. As an apex predator, sharks are a vital indicator of the overall health of the marine ecosystem and the many species within it. The evidence-based data obtained informs the future management of these and other species. The sex of the individuals recorded assists in the understanding of breeding and migration patterns.



Seasearch

MWT have been co-ordinating Seasearch since January 2020 and in that short space of time we have managed to run one Observer course via Zoom with the National Co-ordinator Charlotte Bolton along with several training dives and snorkels; a couple of boat trips to new locations with the support of Discover Diving, and lots of discussions about what has been seen including two new nudibranch records for the Island. 2021 is turning into another great year for Seasearch and the season isn't over yet. Seasearch has been running since 2005 on the Island



Graph showing the number of surveys undertaken each year since it started.

Festival of the Sea

Although covid has played its role in group get togethers over the last year or so we still managed to hold our Festival of the Sea this year, albeit with some additional safety measures in place for the

public, volunteers and staff. It was another great year with an array of critters thanks to Discover Diving and the divers for collecting them. The weekend showed reduced numbers compared to previous years, however a respectable 2000+ passed through our marquee over the two days. It's a great way to showcase the wonders of our marine world with people who don't get to see it and to raise issues linked with this world, such as litter, pollution and over fishing. This year we also ran a corporate event with our sponsors OceanWeb on the Friday night, with the Maritime Group being invited to a talk about the work of MWT and a look at the critters in the tanks. It was a great success and one we hope to repeat next year.

New marine and freshwater assistant

MWT are pleased to announce the marine and freshwater team has expanded to include a marine assistant. Clare is joining us part time for a year but we hope this will continue into the future. Welcome to the team Clare.

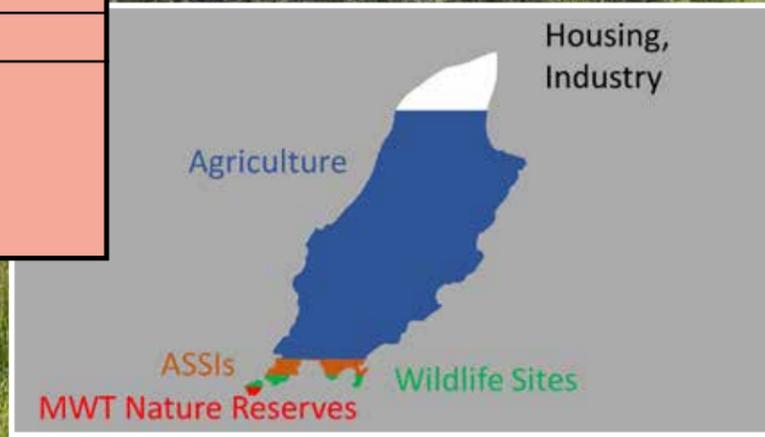
DNA work on Freshwater Pearl Mussels (FPM)

Historically FPM were thought to live in the River Dhoo, around the Braddan Church area, with the last records dating back to 1865. Recent eDNA water sampling has sadly proved that they are no longer present in the River Dhoo or the River Glass. The next phase will be to look into a feasibility study to see if there is anywhere suitable to reintroduce these bivalves into Manx rivers.

Agri-Environment Scheme

David Bellamy, Agri-Environment Officer

Farms visited by MWT	88
Land advised on (area)	24,850 acres
Land advised on (% of IoM)	17.4%
Twitter followers	342
Schoolchildren engaged	180
Outreach opportunities including 2 x launch events, Southern Show, Royal Show, x4 Manx Radio Interviews, x2 Examiner articles, x2 Grassland Society walks, Central Mart & Sheep Sales	14



Manx Wildlife Trust have partnered with the Isle of Man Government to deliver the new Agri-Environment Scheme; a landscape-scale system of farming support. Over the last 50 years Manx Wildlife Trust has acquired 25 nature reserves, however these cover just 0.24% of the Island. Furthermore, legally protected Areas of Special Scientific Interest cover just 4.14% of the country. By contrast, agriculture covers 88% of the land area of the Isle of Man. In order to facilitate nature's recovery, we need to work closely with farmers to make more spaces for nature across the landscape; not just on reserves, but across farmland too, including our lowland arable and grassland farms and the extensive upland pastures and grazed moors.

Manx agriculture is already recognised for its invaluable contribution to the Island's wildlife and stunning landscape. Having never been part of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, farming techniques and financial support on the Isle of Man are markedly different to those found in the UK and Ireland. The Island boasts smaller farms and fields with over 5,000km of field boundaries (some 8.74km per km²) surrounding some 20,000 fields, which have an average size of just 2ha (compared to around 10ha in England). These sod, gorse and thorny hedges are one of the Island's greatest wildlife assets. Amongst the resulting patchwork of varied habitats can be found many iconic farmland species, including: 400 pairs of breeding Curlew in wet, rough grazing areas; 30 pairs of Hen Harrier on the uplands; and 130 pairs of Chough (28% of the combined UK and IOM total) which forage on extensive coastal pastures. The new

Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) recognises and rewards the role Manx farmers will have in nature's recovery by further protecting and enhancing farmland habitats and promoting nature-friendly farming techniques.

The new scheme builds upon an earlier small-scale pilot scheme which was capped at 30 farms (less than 10% of the total) and is the first landscape-scale practical conservation scheme in Manx history. The scheme is completely voluntary, has an initial annual budget of £2 million and is open to all 353 active Manx farmers. The Scheme has 40 recognised initiatives that benefit the environment, from planting trees, creating new hedgerows and traditional Manx sod hedgebanks, creating and restoring wetlands and protecting watercourses and soils. Grants are also available for educational visits on farms, wildlife boxes and nature-friendly arable practices such as winter stubbles and traditional spring cropping to benefit farmland birds.

Everyone wants an Island richer in nature, where financially and environmentally sustainable farms produce healthy, low-input, high-welfare, low-mileage food amongst a stunning landscape. From 2021, many individual small projects on farms will now receive public financial support, such as restoring a silted-up farmland pond, creating a new late-cut hay meadow or re-introducing cattle grazing to an overgrown and neglected rush pasture where Lapwing once bred. By working together with Manx farmers right across the Island, many small initiatives will make a major difference to the fortunes of our farmland wildlife and restore a countryside richer in wildlife for all to enjoy.

Nature-friendly farming: Traditional late-cut, winter-grazed hay meadow in the north of the Isle of Man, home to thousands of protected orchids.



Opposite: The land coverage of agriculture in the Isle of Man.

Left: The IoM's first new habitat, a dub, created under the new scheme at the Guilcagh, Andreas.

Below: Education events, eligible for support under the AES, at Silly Moos.



Find out more at:
www.mwt.im/what-we-do/agri-environment-scheme

The Calf of Man

Aron Sapsford, Bird Warden (Calf of Man)

Although the Calf season does not normally start until early March, the opportunity to visit the islet during a calm spell over New Year could not be missed and day trips on the 1st and 2nd January recorded 29 species of bird, including a Eurasian Woodcock and several species of birds of prey. Little is known about the wildlife present on the Calf during the winter months, so these day trips were particularly valuable.

Once again, Covid restrictions prevented the season from starting on time and we were delayed by government restrictions until late April before we were allowed onto the Calf. We were able to make use of this 'down-time' and efforts to input historical ringing records continued to push this citizen science project forward, with now only six species remaining to complete. This has been achieved by the incredible effort of a small band of volunteers and staff, who have added over 120,000 records of 159 species to our database; this now offers the opportunity to analyse in detail the changes in bird population dynamics over the past 60 years.

Once back on the Calf, spring passage was very stop and start, not helped by prolonged periods of cold northerly winds. Even when the weather improved, passage birds were few and far between and it took until early June for anything notable to arrive; but in the first few days of the month both a Subalpine Warbler and an adult male Woodchat Shrike were recorded. The Calf would seemingly appear to be one of the best places in the British Isles to see Subalpine Warbler, which is almost annual here during late May or early June. Whilst the Woodchat Shrike caused much excitement amongst those present at the Observatory, being just the 5th Calf record and the first since 1994.



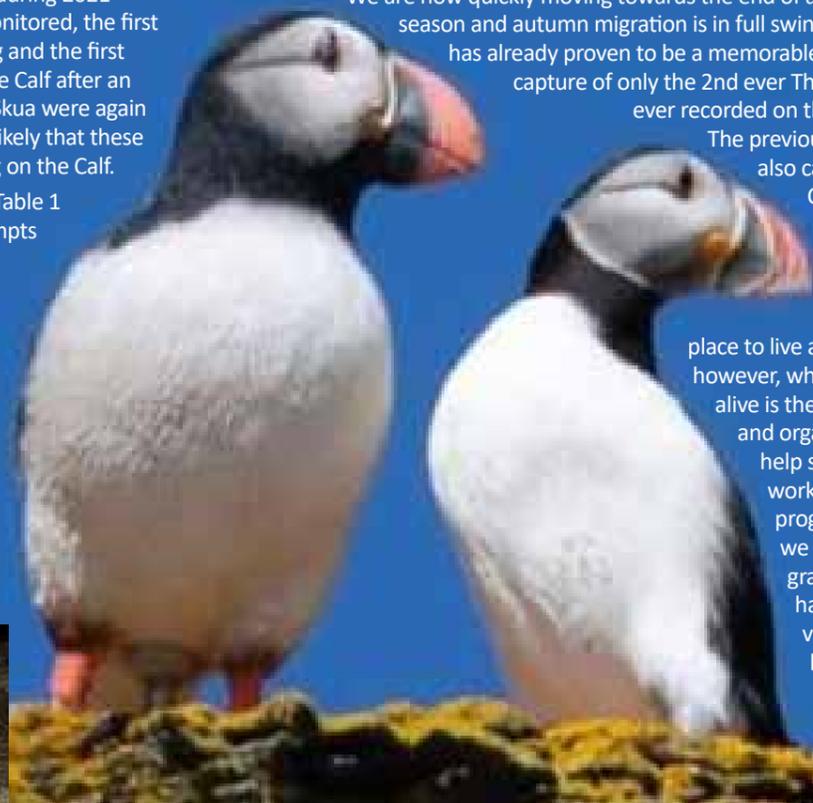
Woodchat Shrike – Robert Fisher

Breeding bird survey work occupies a considerable amount of our time during spring and summer, and in recent years the focus has grown on our important, but often declining seabird populations. Thankfully there were some real success stories during 2021 with a record number of 40 Eider nests being monitored, the first definitive proof of Black Guillemots raising young and the first recorded sighting of Atlantic Puffin landing on the Calf after an absence of 26 years. In addition, a pair of Great Skua were again present throughout the summer and it is highly likely that these may be the next species to be recorded breeding on the Calf.

In general seabirds fared well during 2021, with Table 1 (opposite) showing an increase in breeding attempts for five species, when compared to the average recorded over the last decade, one species remaining stable and just two species declining. Of note is the increase in Manx Shearwater numbers, which have benefited tremendously from the efforts of the Manx Shearwater Recovery Programme which has worked hard to eradicate "Longtails" over the past decade. This joint project, between Manx National Heritage and MWT, illustrates the conservation success that can be achieved through collaboration and appropriate management interventions.



Manx Shearwater – Robert Fisher



On land, the cold and dry spring affected several species, with late breeding attempts and low productivity of young for both Chough and Wheatear. Those summer migrants arriving a little later, such as the Swallow fared better. However, the most exciting news was the discovery of Common Buzzards building a nest on one of the Calf's sea-cliffs, the first time they have attempted to breed on the Calf. The species colonised the Isle of Man earlier this century but have until now remained relatively scarce on the Calf. The breeding attempt was unsuccessful, and we were unable to establish if the nest ever had eggs, however it is likely that this was an inexperienced pair and hopefully they will have more luck next season.

We are now quickly moving towards the end of another busy season and autumn migration is in full swing. September has already proven to be a memorable month with the capture of only the 2nd ever Thrush Nightingale ever recorded on the Isle of Man.

The previous record was also caught on the Calf, way back in May 1989. The Calf is a truly exceptional place to live and work; however, what makes it come alive is the fantastic people and organisations that help support our work and research programmes and we are extremely grateful to all who have supported, volunteered and helped in any way during 2021.



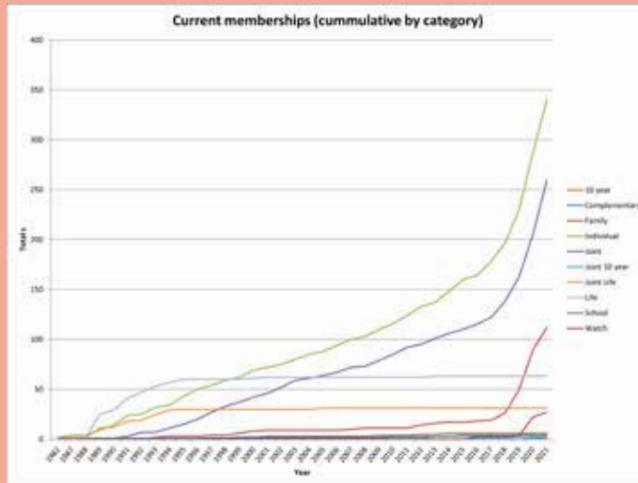
Thrush Nightingale – Robert Fisher

Species	Count Unit	2011 – 2020 Average	2021
Northern Fulmar	Apparently Occupied Site	86	106
Manx Shearwater	Apparently Occupied Burrow	390	900 - 1000
European Shag	Apparently Occupied Nest	139	102
Herring Gull	Apparently Occupied Nest	377	702
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Apparently Occupied Nest	41	25
Great Black-backed Gull	Apparently Occupied Nest	46	55
Common Guillemot	Individual Adult	168	202
Razorbill	Individual Adult	177	178

Table 1

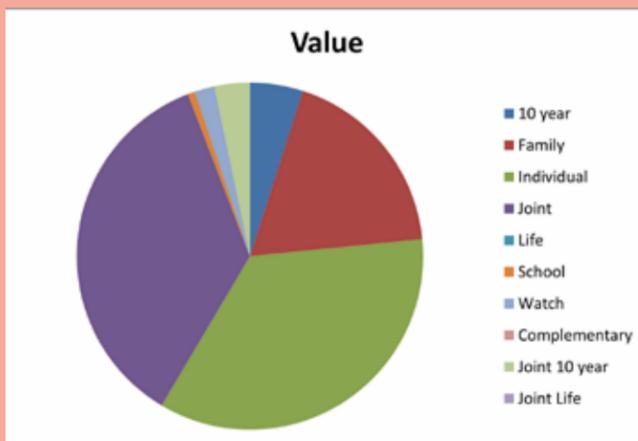
Engagement

Graham Makepeace-Warne, Engagement Manager



We are a membership organisation and we rely heavily on our members not only for income but also the mandate that they give us to act on behalf of Manx nature for the future. Since I started in my role at the beginning of 2018 I have been fortunate to see our membership rise steadily to nearly 850.

The table above shows the growth across the various membership categories. We no longer offer Life or 10 year memberships as these bring a larger, but short term, gain which does not help us with our long term planning and resilience. We also want to ensure that our members stay engaged and actively involved with our work so regular membership administration communications help us to do this. The other membership categories show a consistent improvement and the table below clearly shows that 'individual', 'joint' then 'family' make up our top categories. There are, however, clearly areas we need to improve. Our Junior Watch and Family memberships have not shown the same growth. Whilst Dawn Colley clearly delivers excellent Watch events, we just haven't been marketing this area as well. I hope to produce a Watch specific leaflet over the winter to help with this.



Direct Debits should be the easiest way for us to collect membership fees but the bank seem to make this an unnecessarily

complicated process. Added to this, people are wanting to do things online more and more. We have made some changes to streamline our own processes recently which have been effective but it is still my intention to make it easier for people to manage their memberships and renewals through the website.

Over the last 18 months the average value of our memberships has increased from £31 to £35 thanks to some members opting to donate more than the minimum membership fee through the new website sign-up form. However, our average membership value remains the lowest across the Wildlife Trust's movement. This is not because our basic fees are the cheapest but because we do not actively ask members to donate more after joining. We simply do not have the resources to do this kind of direct telephone marketing activity and I would be thrilled if we could find a volunteer to help with this.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to John Howie for supplying the data and charts for this report but also for his invaluable support in the administration of our members.

Last year, with the help of some of our new Trustees and following some extensive research, we successfully relaunched our corporate membership offer including a new web page: www.mwt.im/your-business and a flyer.

The new scheme is at a much higher value point than the old but, as we work through moving the existing members over, take up has been very positive so far. Furthermore, we have been able to use the new offer to attract some very exciting new blood to our growing list of corporate members including Microgaming, who recently funded and helped us to produce the Island's first Microforest, and Strix, who completed a record stretch of multi-ability footpath at Hairpin Woodlands. As time allows, I look forward to approaching the Island's successful business sector with our new offer.

Engagement through events and the press has continued to be extremely positive despite COVID and Rachael's report, opposite, fully demonstrates the power of our voice through Social Media. I'm also thrilled that Rachael has now started her Master's Degree with Edinburgh Napier in Wildlife Biology and Conservation. I think it is brilliant that MWT are able to support her in this, ensuring a future for home-grown talent and skills in Manx conservation.



Digital Communications

Rachael Harrop, Communications Officer

Facebook

In the last quarter the MWT Facebook page has

- increased by 530 followers to 9996 (Now over 10k!)
- reached 256,389 people, an average of 19,720/week
- had 147 posts/shares

Twitter

In the last quarter the MWT Twitter account has

- increased by 463 followers to 6084
- had 948 tweets retweeted, an average of 73/week
- had 719,800 tweet impressions, an average of 60,900
- had 98 tweets and retweets

Instagram

In the last quarter the MWT Instagram account has

- increased by 115 followers to 2,621
- had a reach of 14,323, an average of 1,100/week
- had 58 posts

The best performing posts across all the channels were around the St Marks elm tree tunnel, an issue that went beyond the Isle of Man in reach, with a public figure, Chris Packham, sharing the story to a massive audience. This has led to figures that are heightened compared to last quarter due to the emotive topic.

Due to the ability to share/retweet on Facebook and Twitter these two platforms have an increased content compared to Instagram.

We also have 2 more members of staff on Twitter, David Bellamy, Agri-Environment Officer, and Rachael Harrop, Communications Officer and Masters Intern (for which this twitter account will mainly focus on), who join CEO, Leigh Morris, Marine Officer, Dr Lara Howe and Engagement Manager, Graham Makepeace-Warne.

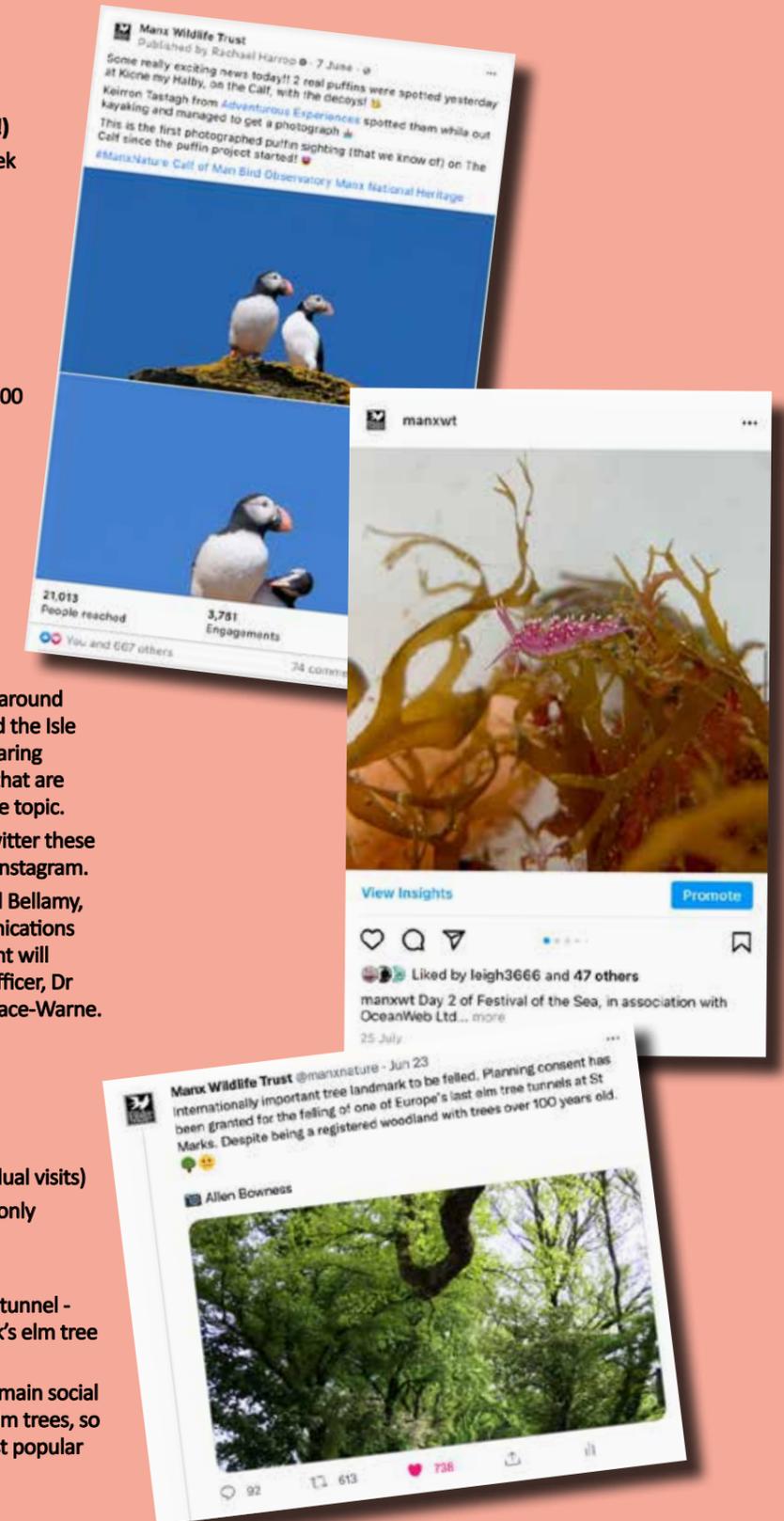
Website

In the last quarter the MWT website

- had 31K users, an average of 2,385/week
- had 35k sessions, an average of 2692/week (individual visits)
- had a bounce rate of 76.3% (percentage of people only viewing 1 page)

The most viewed pages were Events, St Marks elm tree tunnel - MWT's CEO's statement and DEFA's response to St Mark's elm tree tunnel, in that order.

The images on the right show the top post across the 3 main social media channels (the top post for all 3 was around the elm trees, so for Facebook and Instagram it's the second or third most popular shown).



Peatland Survey and Restoration

Sarah Hickey, Mires Officer

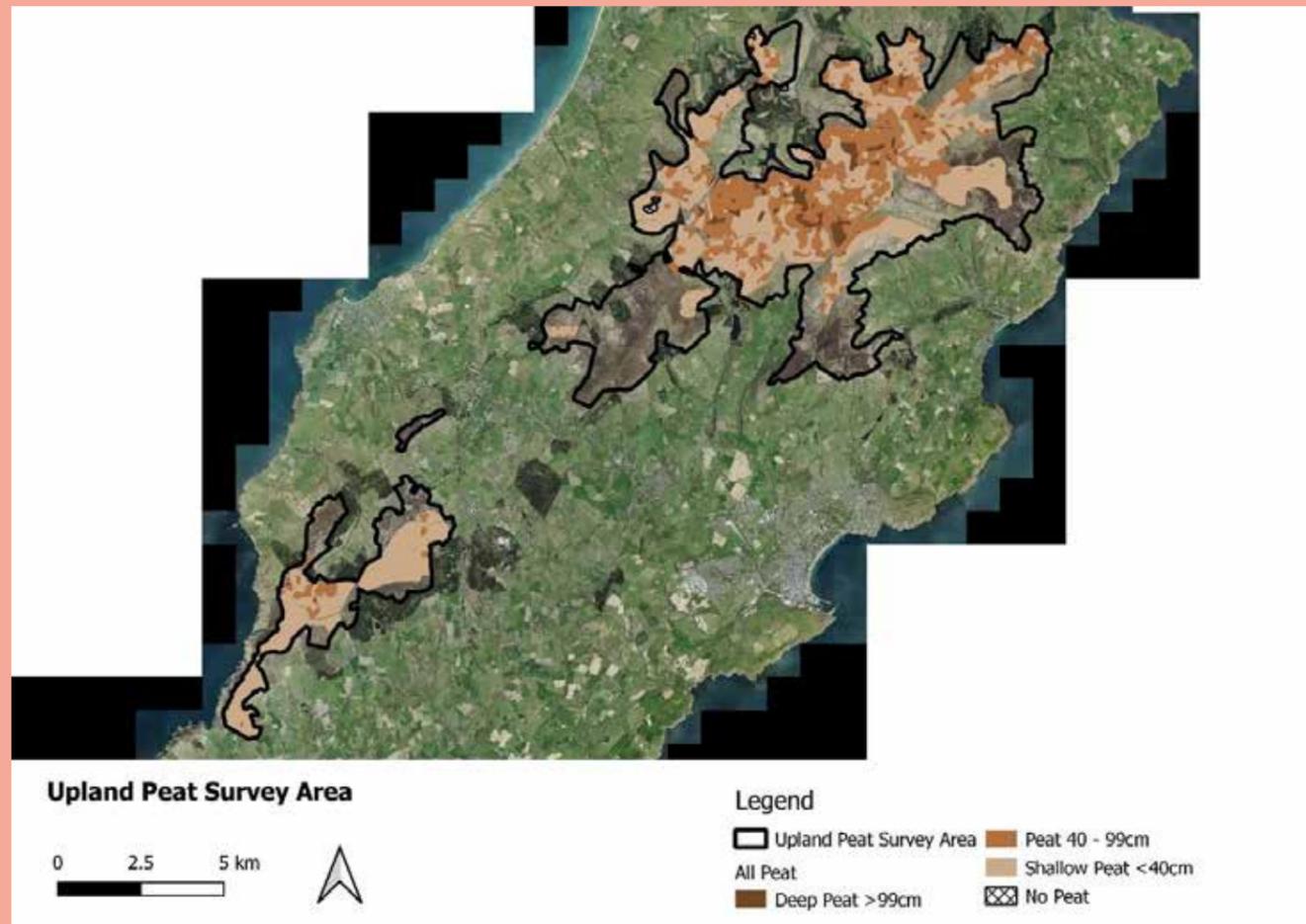


The upland peat survey, which started as a pilot survey in 2018 and was funded for a year from September 2019, is on-going with the help of volunteers. Progress has slowed down, but an area of nearly 5000 hectares has been mapped out of a planned total of 9100. This map is currently being used to help with habitat mapping, land management planning and for CO2e emissions calculations. Data has also been requested by and given to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH). Furthermore, we have contributed to the IUCN Peatland Programme projects map (which can be viewed at www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/projects/isle-man?destination=/projects-map) and produced a poster for the UKOTCF Conference in March 2021 (see opposite). Detailed peatland surveys were undertaken at the start of 2021 to inform restoration work. Surveys included habitat condition assessment and the detailed mapping of erosion features, such as peat hags and drainage channels. The two areas surveyed were the Turbary Pilot Area and Snaefell Footpath Area, which DEFA have prioritised for restoration work. In the future we hope to be

able to survey lowland peat as well. This is found in areas such as the Ballaugh Currags and the Central Valley and has been estimated to cover approximately 476 hectares.

Peat Depth Category	Area (hectares)
Deep Peat >99cm	221
Peat 40-99cm	1716
Shallow Peat <40cm	2996
No Peat	22
Area surveyed since 2018	4955
Percentage of target	54%

Table 1: Upland Peat Survey (Summer 2021)



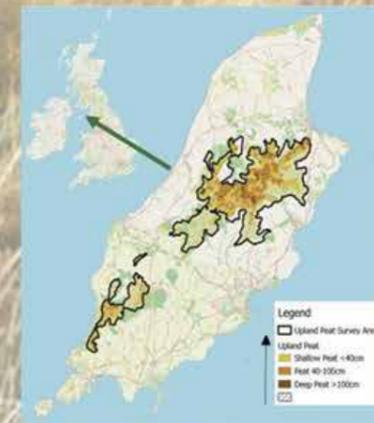
Manx Mires Partnership



- Led by Manx Wildlife Trust, with the help of volunteers.
- Funded by Manx Wildlife Trust, Manx Lottery Trust and Manx National Heritage.
- Supported by the Isle of Man Government and other landowners and farmers.

Why are peatlands and mires important?

- A number of different habitats occur on peatland, but when the habitat is actively forming peat it is known as a mire.
- Peat is a long-term carbon store.
- Peatlands are an important habitats for a number of specialist plant species, invertebrates and wetland birds, such as curlew.
- Peatland habitats are key element of Nature-based Solutions to help mitigate the climate crisis.
- Degraded peatlands are a major source of carbon emissions.



Upland peat survey area on the Isle of Man



Sphagnum mosses: the building blocks of peat.

The Isle of Man, with an area of 57,239 hectares, has up to 10,000 hectares of upland peat habitats, some of which are degraded.

Why are they degraded?

- Historic drainage channels
- Cutting for fuel
- Historic and localised over-grazing
- Commercial forestry
- Wildfire
- Recreation pressure



Degraded peat habitat



Training volunteers to help with the survey.

So far we have...

- Surveyed and mapped the extent and depth of 4643 hectares of peatland with the help of volunteers, including two upland farmers.
- Contributed to the IMPACT Report on climate change mitigation, which influenced the Climate Change Bill and led to the banning of peat extraction.

What next?

- There is now a commitment by the Isle of Man Government to a series of restoration projects starting early 2021 as part of their climate change mitigation plan.
- We have started to survey a pilot area of upland peat to assess habitat condition and produce a restoration plan.

Restoration

- We will work with partners to protect and re-wet existing peat by blocking drainage channels, re-profiling peat hags and stabilising areas of bare peat.
- Restoration will encourage the recovery of peat-forming habitats, such as blanket bog, which will reduce carbon emissions from degraded peat, improve carbon sequestration and reduce wild fire and flood risk.
- Restoration will improve upland habitats for a range of invertebrates and birds, such as Curlew.



Blanket bog habitat on a Manx Wildlife Trust reserve



Upland farmers helping with the survey.



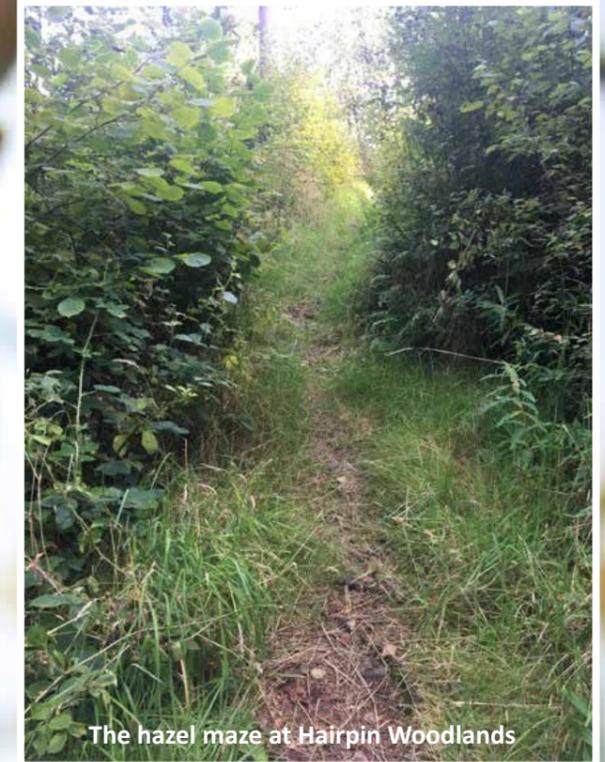
Surveying for the depth and extent of upland peat.



Isle of Man
Government
Reiltys Ellan Vannin

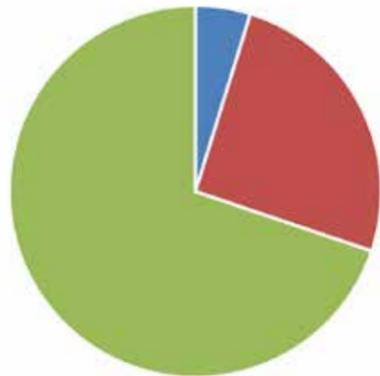
Terrestrial Conservation

Andree Dubbeldam,
Conservation Officer



The hazel maze at Hairpin Woodlands

Billown Limestone Grassland Recovery Project



■ Relic Limestone Grassland in 2019 ■ Restored Limestone Grassland in 2021
■ New Limestone Grassland 2022



Restoring limestone grassland at Billown

Notable Achievements

- Launching of Manx Microforests Project
- Completion of a Manx Woodland Carbon Code
- Restoration of Rosehill ASSI
- Partnership building at Hairpin Woodland Park Site.

The past year has been an intense planning year. To get the big wins down the line we need to have well thought out plans that have received wide agreement with stakeholders and have funding or the potential for funding. I have been helped in no small part by two remarkable interns, Simon Sheath and Hannah Midghall to achieve much more than I thought possible.

Manx Microforests. A micro-forest is a small dense woodland planting about the size of a tennis court. These small woodland plantings are being used world-wide to create wilder community spaces, so are planted in parks, road verges, waste ground, schools, business premises and other open spaces in built up areas. Manx Wildlife Trust intern Hannah Midghall approached local authorities, businesses and community groups to see if there was Island interest in planting Microforests. The answer is a resounding YES! The response of the business community to funding these forests has also been really positive. So this winter we are looking to plant our first sites in Rushen, Onchan, Douglas and Ramsey. Coming out of lock-down many local authorities are also looking to have more longer grass 'no mow May' areas, and we have been advising on these too. The scope for Manx Wildlife Trust to have a much more active presence in the built up areas of the Island could be one of the lasting legacies of COVID and something we will hope to build upon next year.

Manx Carbon Code. The Climate Change Bill has passed through Tynwald and part of this is provision for local carbon offsetting via nature-based solutions such as tree planting or creating

new marine eel-grass beds. Our intern, Simon Sheath, worked for six months to create a fit-for-purpose handbook for carbon offsetting and drawdown. We are now well placed to form partnerships with local commercial offsetting enterprises to help plant trees, restore marine or peatland habitats.

Restoration of Rosehill Quarry. In 2019 we started to develop an ambitious plan called 'Action for Wildlife' that will help save endangered habitats and wildlife on the Island. While we are developing many plans that we will roll out, one project has stood out. This is a plan to restore or create limestone grassland on the Island. We have been working with Colas, the owner of Rosehill Quarry ASSI, to expand and restore their limestone grassland. Working with students from University College Isle Of Man we have nearly completed the restoration of the ASSI. The next step will be the massive expansion of the species-rich habitat into the adjacent quarry areas.

Our work at the hairpin this year has been mostly behind the scenes. Agreeing land tenancies with DEFA, applying for planning permission, working with funding partners such as the Douglas Rotarians and partnerships with neighbours such as Milntown Gardens does not sound that exciting, but it is all building up to a final push to create an 80-acre destination site and nature reserve by 2024. In the meantime the trees we planted four years ago are now fully established, with a natural maze now looking very maze like and tree tubes being removed in many areas. Ramsey Forest is now the focus of our ongoing, DEFA funded, Wildflowers on Mann project.

The big projects are really interesting to work on, but it is the site visits and talking to people who want to do their bit for nature that has really been the highlight of the year. COVID has opened a floodgate of interest in nature and well-being and so many people have become highly self-educated about nature. The last year it has raised the bar of ambition beyond anything we have previously seen.

Education

September 2020 to 11th September 2021
 Dawn Colley, Biodiversity & Education Officer



With COVID restrictions, 34 events have had to be cancelled over this period. Highlights include the residential A level biology course which included a session on carbon capture in trees. The WATCH summer events were well attended and children who attended seven or more sessions could earn themselves a hedgehog award. Seven awards were given out over the summer period to some very enthusiastic young nature spotters! The introduction of the Wildlife Observers course for adults has become a lead in for people to discover which aspects of wildlife to follow. Hopefully we will have more keen recorders for wildlife as a result.

Thanks to funding from DEFA and DESC, I was able to engage with 20 schools across the Island reaching well over 2,500 schoolchildren

The Invertebrate group held 11 sessions over this period with 73 attendees and over 30 1/2 hours of event time. Damselies, dragonflies and dark green bush crickets were the species targeted for training and identification. Samples were also gathered from the Curraghams RAMSAR site and a qualitative list of species is still being drawn up, however the group found pea mussels in the area and also a ground beetle *pterostichus gracilis* which was a first record for the Island. 27 species of spiders, 15 of beetles, 44 diptera and 5 of butterfly have been recorded so far.

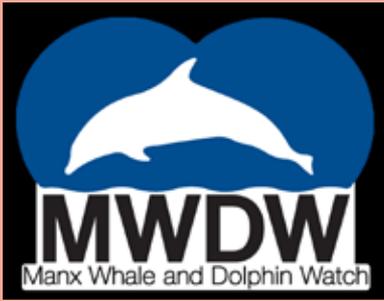
On 14th August the group went to Close y Quayle and identified 5 species of butterfly, 2 moths including the bordered beauty (widespread but somewhat local and infrequent on the Isle of Man) 5 species of spiders and 2 of harvestman, 1 species of woodlouse, 21 species of diptera and 2 species of leafhoppers.

The butterfly transect on Close Sartfield was resumed with the final date for data collection on the transect at the end of September. This transect has been running since 1993 and shows when the Speckled Wood butterfly first arrived on Island in 2009. Data from the site has shown a gradual increase in the numbers of butterflies present, particularly of meadow brown butterflies with the peak of the season for butterflies being in early August.

Number of people attending education events	6,121
Total number of event hours	330
Total number of events run	144
Primary schools engaged	16
- Primary schoolchildren reached	2,478
Secondary schools engaged	4
Guide/Scout groups engaged	10
WATCH group events held	17
- Children attending Watch events	296
Invertebrate Group events held	11
Adult education sessions held	25



Dawn with her Biosphere Award for Education received in October 2021



Manx Whale & Dolphin Watch

January to end July 2021

Bryony Manley, Researcher at MWDW



Starlight by Dave Corkish

Data	Amount
Land-based surveys	35.5 hours
Boat-based surveys	21 hours
Public sightings	248 reports

Species	No of sightings
Harbour porpoise	160
Common dolphin	7
Bottlenose dolphin (total)	103
- (of which) Moonlight and Starlight	83
Risso's dolphin	95
Minke whale	14
Unidentified small cetacean	5

Despite another rocky start to the year with the effects of COVID Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch have managed a good number of hours of dedicated cetacean surveying and collected many reports of whales, dolphins, and porpoises from members of the public.

The year began well with very early sightings of Risso's dolphins in late February off the Calf of Man. Sightings have continued on and off throughout the summer with a large pod of around 30 dolphins using Manx waters at times, including five young calves. An exciting encounter was had in mid-July of an unusual looking Risso's dolphin near Langness. The individual observed was larger and more uniformly grey than expected of a Risso's dolphin, with few of the distinctive scratches expected of the species. Despite the usual Risso's colouration of the underside observed on breaching, the animal was also seen to have a small, stubby beak. On discussion with a fellow Risso's dolphin researcher in Scotland it was determined that this was most likely a hybrid between a Risso's and bottlenose dolphin, one of only a few recorded around the British Isles.

The first minke whale sighting came early off Bradda Head in mid-March and was followed in early June by an incredible sighting of a minke whale breaching not far off Peel, captured on camera by Ian and Jane Young whilst out on their boat.

It seems to have been a good year for common dolphins, with several sightings of large pods around the Island from mid-April throughout the summer. A particularly excellent sighting took place on 22nd July with a large pod of around 100 animals including very young calves. The pod was so relaxed around the boat that after bow riding animals were observed mating and even a calf suckling from its mother.

For the second year Moonlight and Starlight, the resident bottlenose dolphin pair, have been delighting people with sightings up and down the north-west coast. Starlight is coming up to two years old now, and still learning hunting techniques from mother Moonlight. The only way to sex a dolphin is with a good view on the underside, through photograph or video, and luckily enough we managed to get one from local photographer Dave Corkish. Excitingly, this revealed Starlight to be female making her, as far as researchers from the Moray Firth know, the first daughter of Moonlight who has previously had three sons. Whilst the pair have still been frequenting their usual stretch from Peel to Ramsey, they have also been spotted slightly further afield, being seen in Port Erin in early March and Douglas Bay in mid-July. Here's hoping the pair continue their residence around the Isle of Man for many more months to come.