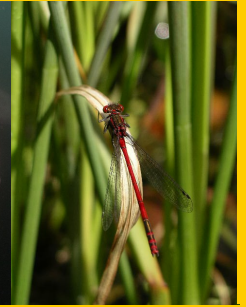
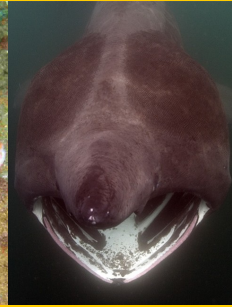


# Biodiversity Matters



Issue 6

DEFA's Biodiversity News

July 2013

## Biodiversity Strategy Consultation

*Liz Charter*

An ambitious plan to conserve the Island's biodiversity has been launched by Environment Minister, Phil Gawne. "Managing our natural wealth to 2020" is the Isle of Man's first published biodiversity strategy. The Strategy aims, by 2020, to manage biodiversity change and minimise loss, maintain and where necessary restore or enhance native biodiversity and actively involve society in understanding, appreciating and safeguarding our biodiversity.

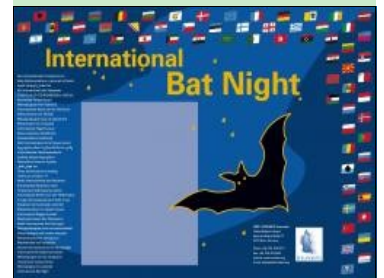
Biodiversity brings benefits worth at least 40 million a year to the Isle of Man according to a recent study, but this is the tip of the iceberg as this only includes habitats on land and is based on limited statistics. Scotland recently identified that biodiversity is worth £21.5 billion a year to their economy. According to the Scottish Government, Scotland's insects generate as much as £43 million a year for the economy (including pollination and pest control) and its peatlands are believed to store 10 times more carbon than all of the UK's trees. The carbon stored in peat in Manx soils has been valued at £95m (2010 values).

The strategy is a draft for consultation and everyone is invited to respond to the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA). The consultation runs until **September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013**. Copies are available to read on line on the government website ([www.gov.im/consultations/](http://www.gov.im/consultations/)) and in Commissioners offices, public libraries, DEFA, Manx Wildlife Trust and the Manx Museum.



Lhen Trench, Erica Spencer

## Events



### International Bat Night

24th August 2013 is International Bat Night. The Manx Bat Group are holding a bat evening in Union Mills and Snugborough, meeting at the Spar shop at 8.20 pm.

[www.manxbatgroup.org](http://www.manxbatgroup.org)

### Beach Clean

There will be a beach clean at Poyllvaaish, nr Castletown on Saturday 3rd August 2013, 10-12.30. For further information go to [manxwt.org.uk](http://manxwt.org.uk)

*See Beach Buddies on page 3*



FWAG walk at Upper Billown, Malew. 20th August 2013.

[manxchaser@hotmail.com](mailto:manxchaser@hotmail.com)





Bivalve biodiversity

### National Horse Mussel Workshop at Port Erin, *Dr Peter Duncan*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Horse Mussel Researcher's Meeting was held in Port Erin between the 19-20<sup>th</sup> June, organised by Dr Fiona Gell, Senior Marine Biodiversity Officer with DEFA. The horse mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*) is particularly important because its complex byssal thread structures hold the sediment and each other together to form potentially large biogenic reef structures which in turn support significant biodiversity. The species is predominantly a temperate cool water bivalve and its potential as a monitor of climate change was a major topic of conversation. The main Isle of Man horse mussel site, off the Point of Ayre, is protected as part of Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve.

### UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for the Isle of Man? *Peter Longworth*

In May 2013, Tynwald unanimously adopted a target to seek the accolade of the Isle of Man and our Territorial Waters as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This is an international "label of excellence" for sites that make efforts to bring together nature conservation and sustainable development in practice; a working example of a more balanced relationship between nature and people.

Despite their name, Biosphere Reserves are not restrictive areas, but instead are living, working places. To be effective, they depend upon organisations and individuals working together to develop "win-win" initiatives that improve our quality of life by enhancing the local environment and strengthening the local economy.

The Isle of Man Biosphere project would be the first entire jurisdiction awarded this accolade. It is also unique for there to be such a wide range of high quality natural landscapes, ecosystems and species with a huge range of cultural credentials alongside an active, diverse economy. It is thought the project will match Manx pride and strong community spirit with a rare international accolade.

UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Biosphere Reserves have three Functions, 1) to support and enhance nature conservation, 2) to encourage sustainable development, 3) to improve environmental knowledge, learning and awareness. Core areas of a Biosphere Reserve would be areas that already have high levels of protection such as ASSI's and Marine Protected Areas.

### Santon Gorge and Port Soldrick ASSI, *Aline Thomas and Erica Spencer*

The designation of this stunning area has now been confirmed. It has been afforded this protection for a number of reasons including the area of semi-natural riparian woodland which contains a large number of relict oaks, many of which are believed to be over 200 years of age.

Santon Gorge,  
*Aline Thomas*Cotton grass on  
uplands, *Peter  
McEvoy*

### Uplands Working Group, *Dr Peter McEvoy*

The Department has instigated a working group of upland stakeholders to identify the diverse uses and values of the uplands and to develop a vision for the future for the Department's upland estates and adjoining lands. Peter McEvoy will lead the project in collaboration with colleagues from Agriculture and the Forestry, Amenity and Lands Directorates.

The Department has also appointed an independent chairman, Professor McAdam, to ensure that the views of all parties are fairly represented. In a recent visit to the Isle of Man, he had a chance to walk the hills and meet with a number of uplands stakeholders, managers and owners. Following his visit, Prof. McAdam remarked that the Manx uplands are in good condition relative to the UK, but face many of the same problems such as declines in biodiversity, loss of traditional farming skills and climate change.

**Beach Buddies, *Bill Dale***

Beach Buddies are a recently formed group whose aim is to remove items of litter from our beaches and countryside which can damage wildlife and pets. Such items all too often include fishing line, plastic bags, broken glass, syringes, broken tins and tiny items of plastic.

We hope to raise awareness amongst the Island's schoolchildren regarding the impact of depositing litter and the effect it has on our environment - not only on our beaches, but also in our glens, footpaths and walkways - and the serious injuries which can be sustained as a direct result by wildlife, particularly birdlife, seals, basking sharks and turtles.

Clear evidence of the impact of litter in our oceans can be seen at

[www.midwayfilm.com.html](http://www.midwayfilm.com.html)

**Developer's caution against damage to birds *Richard Selman***

A Manx company has been given a formal caution following damage to nesting birds during development work. On removing a roof, sparrow nests (specially protected) were disturbed and lost. This resulted from a lack of checks prior to works and is deemed reckless behaviour. Advice is being provided and improved procedures are being developed with regard to bats and birds.

Mrs Cannell MHK, Member for Forestry, Amenity and Lands, said "It is unfortunate that cases like this still arise over 20 years after the Wildlife Act came into force. It is important that everyone is aware of the legal requirements. With suitable planning there is no reason why this sort of case should arise."

If work is necessary during the breeding period it may be necessary to prevent access to birds earlier in the season.

**Late emergence of Manx butterflies, *Manx Butterfly Conservation, Garry Curtis.***

Last years cool, wet summer followed by a harsh winter has resulted in the late emergence of a number of Manx butterflies. The best examples of this are shown by a few species which overwinter as pupae or caterpillars. For pupae it takes a prolonged period of increased temperatures before they emerge whereas some of the species which overwinter as butterflies can be tempted out on the odd sunny day in early spring. For overwintering larvae the ground has to warm up sufficiently for the larvae food plant to grow (and to wake up the hibernating caterpillars).

The good news is that the weather so far this summer has been more favourable to butterflies and they should all have a chance to recover in numbers. Indeed two of the early spring species, wall brown and orange tip, have been seen on the wing the first week in July which is exceptionally late for them but is a firm indication of just how favourable present conditions are. Both small copper and meadow browns have emerged late this season but at the time of writing have been recorded in good numbers.

For more information see our website <http://www.manxbutterflyconservation.co.im/>, follow the Manx Butterfly Conservation Facebook page and Twitter under @manxbutterflies.



Small copper



Orange tip



Wall brown



Meadow brown



### Isle of Man Fungus Group *Liz Charter*

An Isle of Man Fungus Group has been formally established. After the first AGM there was an exotic fungus tasting session which was greatly enjoyed. A programme of events is planned for the autumn. The group's aims are to encourage people to enjoy all aspects of fungi and to record Manx species, what they are and where they grow. The group is organising two weekend workshops to help people with identification of fungi and safe enjoyment of edible mushrooms. Nev Kilkenny will be visiting from Scotland to enthuse and teach the workshops which last year were very successful. Book through DEFA (tel. 695741). It is hoped to hold public events to raise awareness of fungi and their importance. The group also plans to get involved in ensuring that good fungi habitats are conserved. For further information please visit the Isle of Man Fungus Group page on the Manx Biodiversity website: [www.manxbiodiversity.org](http://www.manxbiodiversity.org)



Stump puffballs  
*Liz Charter*

### A big year for breeding birds at the Ayres, *Louise Samson*

Fifty clutches of little tern eggs have been recorded at the Ayres National Nature Reserve this year. This is the highest number for many years. A few are thought to be re-laid, previously failed clutches, thirty-two clutches had hatched at the time of writing and six are still being incubated. Two clutches had been predated and seven had unknown outcomes but it is likely that many of these hatched. Extreme care is needed when walking on the beach while nesting continues and all dogs must be on a lead until 31st July.

Arctic terns are also doing well with over thirty nests recorded across the Ayres. When last checked seven pairs of birds were still incubating at the Point of Ayre and two within the little tern colony. There has also been a small flock of approximately thirty sandwich terns with recently fledged young. This species breeds on the islets of Strangford Lough and the adults bring them to the rich feeding grounds off the Ayres shortly after fledging. A constant stream of over 1000 Manx shearwaters has been recorded flying over the NNR in July heading east. Small numbers nest on the Calf but there are huge colonies off South Wales and smaller ones elsewhere on the western coasts. These birds travel far in search of rich feeding grounds.

With regard to other interest on the reserve several moth enthusiasts managed to record the scarce crimson and gold this year although numbers appear to be lower than in previous years. This species flies for only a couple of weeks and the flight period varies year to year. A basking shark was recorded off the Point of Ayre in July and there were good numbers of mackerel off shore at the time of writing. Dark green fritillaries were still on the wing nectaring on thistles and knapweed. The delicate deep pink pyramidal orchid, ladies bedstraw, restharrow, mouse-ear hawkweed and thyme can all be seen flowering in the dunes along with the splendid blue of sea holly and the trumpet heads of sea bindweed. The warden can be contacted with information of interest on 07624 365131.

### Wireweed survey, *Rebecca Giesler*

An investigation into the distribution of an invasive non-native seaweed called Wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*) has been carried out as part of a Master's thesis for the University of St Andrews.

Thirty-five sites were surveyed around the entire island and wireweed was found from the south of the island to north of Ramsey and White Strand Beach and on the west coast. Combined with wireweed sub tidal location data provided by SeaSearch and Tony Glen we had a good idea of which sites it has reached and how abundant it was. It is hoped that this work will provide a baseline for any future work.

Marine invasive species can cause problems for water users and native wildlife by fouling structures, competing with local species and potentially causing ecosystem changes. Wireweed is known to displace native algae by competing with other seaweeds and shading underlying plants. The project also looks at potential management strategies to prevent impacts from wireweed and stop other invasive species reaching the Isle of Man.



Wireweed, *Rebecca Giesler*