

# Biodiversity Matters



Issue 4

DEFA's Biodiversity News

July 2011

## Peat, carbon and water beetles

Peat is a resource that the Isle of Man seems to have plenty of, but this has never been properly assessed. At first sight the hills are covered in it and there are some areas of deep peat in the lowland. But how much is there and is there any potential to increase the carbon and water storage capacity of our upland peatlands?

Lena Weissert, a Swiss student at University College, London visited for a month this summer in order to assess peat depths on the southern hills and to look at the extent of active peat formation and estimate the carbon storage of the area and its potential if the management were adapted. Much of the hill land has relatively thin peat but samples have been taken and will be analysed at the University in the coming months. Such collaboration between the Department and universities can be fruitful, for a relatively small investment of time, if well-steered. We are looking forward to her report.

Also here in July, was Professor Garth Foster, searching for water beetles in our upland bogs, pools and flushes. This renowned specialist has just produced a review of scarce and threatened water beetles of Great Britain, for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and collaborated to produce the recent Irish Red List for this group of species. He made 148 records of 57 species during a week on the Isle of Man, including 3 species not recorded since 1910, but feels that the Island is still under-recorded, so a red data assessment is not yet possible. He will be happy to receive further records of water beetles and to check specimens.

*Dr Richard Selman*



The UK Ministry of Justice and Defra are currently considering whether the Convention is to be extended to the Island. DEFA has held a workshop with Bob Brown from Northern Ireland to look at ways to develop a Biodiversity Strategy. A committee will be established in the autumn.

*Liz Charter*

## Events

Sunday 28th August:  
DEFA and the Manx Wildlife Trust will be hosting a **BioBlitz at the Raggatt**. Everyone welcome.

For further information see page 4 or contact Liz Charter telephone: 695741 or email: [liz.charter@gov.im](mailto:liz.charter@gov.im)

On Sunday 21st August the Manx Wildlife Trust is holding a **Marine BioBlitz** event at Niarbyl. Contact Eleanor Stone - telephone: 844432; [www.manxwt.org.uk](http://www.manxwt.org.uk); email: [Eleanor@manxwt.org.uk](mailto:Eleanor@manxwt.org.uk).

## Recent News

The report on the British Lichen Society's visit has now been published:

Seaward, M.R.D. & Hawkins, K. (2011) British Lichen Society Field Meeting to the Isle of Man, 22-27 April 2010. British Lichen Society Bulletin 108: pages 75-95.

## DEFA website

View the Department's website for regular updates on consultations and to see the development of information on our Areas of Special Scientific Interest.



**Isle of Man**  
Government

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Oystercatcher at the Ayres

### Wildlife Crime

Recent investigations have resulted in successful prosecutions for ferreting within the Ayres National Nature Reserve, for driving off-road on a beach within an Area of Special Scientific Interest (under the Road Traffic Act), and a formal caution for non-compliance with the regulations governing the keeping of certain birds. There is also improving coordination regarding off-road driving on the hills. The Police Wildlife Liaison Officers are thanked for their help in these matters.

Dr Richard Selman

### Sea bird nest sites at Maughold Head and the limestone coast at Port St Mary gain protection

The Department has recently consulted stakeholders on the designation of two new Areas of Special Scientific Interest. The designation of **Port St Mary Ledges & Kallow Point ASSI** was confirmed in April following consultation with the Department of Infrastructure, Commissioners and users of the area including local fishermen.



Map showing extent of Port St Mary Ledges & Kallow Point ASSI

The area extends down as far as the astronomical low water and is notable for the combination of limestone geology and varied terrain that makes this an important and irreplaceable location for Manx coastal biodiversity.

One of the features are the pools characterised by the coralline algae *Corallina officinalis*, with a number of other species of green, brown and red seaweeds, grazing snails and the top shell *Gibbula cineraria*. There are also small patches of the red seaweed *Osmundea pinnatifida* and *Gelidium pusillum*, which is a scarce biotope in the IOM and also in the UK. Above the tide line, the ASSI includes vegetated shingle, hard cliff and coastal grassland habitats. The site also hosts a number of important breeding and visiting bird species.

### Maughold Cliffs & Broughs ASSI

The cliffs at Maughold are well-known as an important breeding site for sea and coastal birds. Manx National Heritage is the main owner of the site and it, along with the Commissioners and Department of Infrastructure fully support the Department's decision to award the site protected status.

Aline Thomas



Black guillemot (Adam Denard)



Shags (Adam Denard)



Cobra boots, python shoes and reptilian belt

### New Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Bill 2010 successfully passed through Tynwald and received Royal Assent in October 2010. Further legal formalities are necessary before this can be brought into force, slightly complicated by the change in government departments. It will bring the legislation governing the import and export of endangered wildlife up to date, including species subject to monitoring controls. This is grounded in the Convention on International trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), under which there is an international review of the legislation of its Parties to bring them all up to a suitable level.

A Transfer of Functions Order was therefore laid before Tynwald in June, bringing the new Act under the responsibility of this Department, and an Appointed Day Order which now empowers the Wildlife Committee to undertake its functions under the Act, in order to agree the new Regulations and Order, bringing the rest of the Act into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.

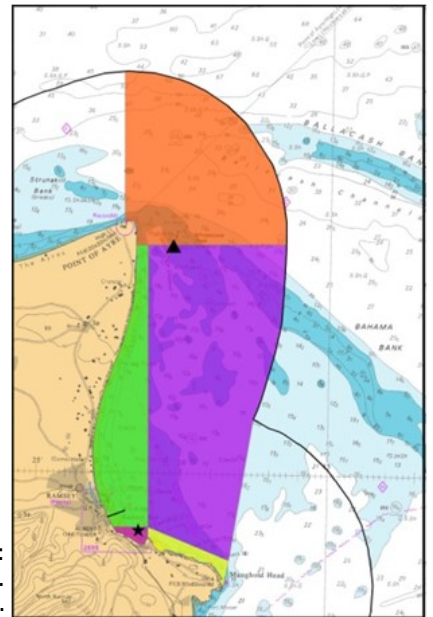
Dr Richard Selman

## Zoning plan announced for new Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve

In July, DEFA announced the proposed zoning for the Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve, based on a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process and over 200 formal responses from representatives of a wide range of marine user groups. Special zones will offer different levels of protection for different features. There will be a highly-protected Eelgrass Zone (pink) in the south of the Bay, a Conservation Zone (green) in the inner bay and a large Horse Mussel Zone (orange) to protect the special horse mussel reef feature to the north and east of the Point of Ayre.

The Marine Nature Reserve will also include a large Fisheries Zone (purple) to be managed by local fishermen through the Manx Fish Producers' Organisation. DEFA plans to complete the designation and implementation of Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve by the end of 2011. There are many ways you can get involved in the setting up and management of the Marine Nature Reserve. For more information contact Fiona Gell in DEFA Fisheries: [Fiona.gell@gov.im](mailto:Fiona.gell@gov.im) or 695738.

The Zoning Plan:  
Seazone data © British Crown Copyright, 2005. All rights reserved.  
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A burrowing sea anemone and some pink maerl seaweed (Jim Self)

A diver surveying a maerl bed (Jim Self)

A cowrie (Jim Self)

## First Seasearch Monitoring dives for Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve

As part of the survey and monitoring programme for the Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve 13 volunteer divers led by Seasearch Isle of Man Co-ordinator, Tony Glen, carried out two days of survey diving in Ramsey Bay. The dives concentrated on the bright pink maerl habitats north of Ramsey and the lush green eelgrass meadows south of Ramsey. Maerl is a seaweed which lays down a coral-like skeleton and forms a habitat for hundreds of species. During the maerl dives the Seasearchers recorded beautiful daisy anemones, hermit crabs and light bulb sea squirts.

Eelgrass is a flowering plant which is protected under the Wildlife Act. It is an important nursery ground for many species of fish and shellfish. During dives in the eelgrass meadows, divers recorded huge spotted sea hares, pipefish and tiny colourful nudibranchs (sea slugs).

*Dr Fiona Gell and Laura Hanley*

## Manx Agri-environment Scheme

DEFA recently carried out a consultation on the future of the Pilot Agri-environment Scheme. We received a higher than average response rate for this consultation, with the majority of respondents in favour of retaining an Agri-environment Scheme. Opinions were divided on the best way to progress the Scheme, with good support for the options outlined in the consultation document. However, there were many responses that suggested Scheme funds would be better spent conserving semi-natural habitats. Full details and information on what the Agri-environment Scheme is, can be viewed on the Government consultations website: <http://www.gov.im/ConsultationDetail.gov?id=213>

The consultation results were presented to the DEFA Minister, John Shimmin, at the Agriculture Committee where it was agreed to defer a decision on a new scheme for 12 months. This deferral is to take account of the forthcoming review of the Countryside Care Scheme to ensure that both Schemes are in broad alignment and without overlap. Current Agri-environment participants with expiring agreements in March 2012 will have the option of signing a 1-year renewal pending implementation of a new Scheme.

*Dr Peter McEvoy*



Rhododendron (*R. ponticum*) is a familiar sight in parks and gardens, but has the potential to invade woodland and moorland habitat.

### Invasive non-native species

Invasive non-native species are one of the most significant threats to biodiversity across the world ranking alongside climate change and habitat loss.

As our knowledge of the effects of invasive species increases and new, non-native species are recorded in the Isle of Man, it is important that our legislation is updated to prevent other species causing similar problems. In the last year, significant changes have been made to Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act, which lists species of both plant and animal that are considered to be non-native and potentially invasive in the Isle of Man. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is perhaps one of the best known species currently listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act.

The updated list includes an additional 33 species and was compiled after extensive research and public consultation and includes, in particular, a number of aquatic plants, non-native fish and self-seeding garden shrubs. Examples include all species of coarse fish present in the Island, aquatic plants such as New Zealand pygmyweed and water fern, and invasive garden plants such as Montbretia, Rhododendron and Griselinia.

The full list is available to view on the DEFA website by using the following link <http://www.gov.im/daff/Wildlife/introductions.xml> together with an explanation of the law on invasives.

Dr Peter McEvoy

### BioBlitz at the Raggatt near Peel: Sunday 28th August

What is a BioBlitz? This is a relatively new idea for getting people enthused about biodiversity by concentrating on one area and 'blitzing' all the wildlife – in the sense of finding, identifying and recording, not blitzing as with mower, weed-killer or bulldozer!

During the day we will search river banks, fossick among the bushes, turn over stones, dabble in ponds and peer into crevices, through binoculars and down microscopes. This is all to see what magnificent and mysterious biodiversity lurks in the Raggatt tree planting area and along the heritage trail.

We are inviting the public, especially families and young people, to join specialists and local naturalists. Children must be accompanied by adults. We hope for a good turn out and sunny warm weather. If it is a disastrously wet day we will change the event to Monday 29th.

The programme for the day suits the groups involved and starts with bird watching and opening a moth trap and finishes with electro-fishing the river. In the middle of the day we will tackle the invertebrate challenge and record butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, flies, things that hop and burrow, swim and wriggle as well as drop out of bushes. Plants, fungi and trees, small mammals, bats and fish will all come under scrutiny. Taking a closer look at all sorts of life-forms is both fascinating and fun. The Manx Bat Group European Bat Night event will form an important part of the BioBlitz, kicking off with a bat walk on Saturday 27th. Join us in recording our wonderful wild world.

Liz Charter



6-spot burnet moth on cat's ear flower



Musk thistle at Jurby Airfield ASSI



Dark green fritillary butterfly feeding on red clover in a hay meadow



Lemon-scented fern at Tholt y Will

### Ramsey Estuary ASSI turned down

The designation of Ramsey Estuary Area of Scientific Interest was rescinded following an extended consultation period in 2010, with heated debate centring on the potential for a marina in the harbour. A public meeting and meetings with local businesses left a split between marina supporters, and those who were supportive or unaffected by the designation. The Minister felt that neither confirming nor splitting the site would be the answer and his rescindment letter has been posted on the Department's website, explaining his views.

Giant tachinid fly *Tachina grossa* at Eary Cushlin



Dr Richard Selman

Actual size = 15-19mm Page 4