



Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), can cause significant economic and ecological damage in the Isle of Man

Invasive non-native species consultation

Invasive non-native species are a significant threat to biodiversity ranking alongside climate change and habitat loss. They can disrupt ecosystems, be costly to control and cause harm to human health. Increased global trade and travel have accelerated their spread.

The Wildlife Act (1990) makes it an offence *to release or allow to escape into the wild any animal species which is not ordinarily resident, and is not a regular visitor to the Island in a wild state, or any species listed on Schedule 8 (Part I)*. It is also an offence *to plant or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant species listed in Schedule 8 (Part II)*.

As our knowledge 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 provide adequate protection. In recognition of this DEFA has recently issued a consultation on changes to Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act. Responses will be welcomed from all interested parties.

A full consultation document, including suggested species to be added to the Schedule can be obtained electronically from <http://www.gov.im/consultations.gov> or by contacting Dr Peter McEvoy at DEFA on 01624 695742.

Dr Peter McEvoy

Protected species



Bee orchids continue to thrive at Ronaldsway airport. Photo: Aline Thomas

Areas of Special Scientific Interest—an update

Since last summer we have designated and confirmed two new ASSIs. The first site is a large coastal site of species-rich meadow, cliffs, coastal grassland, reedbed, shingle and inter-tidal habitats totalling 61 hectares (153 acres). One of the most interesting areas here is a wet flushed slope, with three orchid species, Black Bog Rush and Saltmarsh Flat Sedge. It is lightly grazed by cattle which is crucial to prevent scrub growth.

The second site is species-rich grassland in the north and covers an area of 12 hectares (30 acres). These meadows have received very little agricultural improvement and therefore remain very rich botanically with spectacular Greater Butterfly Orchids and the glossy-fruited Pale Sedge.

The site is diverse and important thanks to the dedication of the landowner and his two tenant farmers who cut hay each year after 1st August. Farm yard manure is applied to maintain the fertility and produce a good hay crop. One field is grazed by cattle in spring and autumn as the terrain does not make the field suitable for hay cutting machinery. This is advantageous as the field has structural diversity providing shelter and feeding opportunities for a range of insects and birds. DEFA has Management Agreements with the tenants to assist them to continue the management of this ASSI.

Aline Thomas



Pale sedge *Carex pallescens*. Photo: Peter McEvoy

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The Department of Environment,
Food and Agriculture

Biodiversity Matters



Issue 3

DEFA's Biodiversity News

July 2010

Biodiversity officers in DEFA

Government continues to meet its nature conservation responsibilities through the new Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. Peter McEvoy is now working within the Agriculture Division and is still involved in the Agri-environment scheme, plant conservation, habitats and ASSI designation. Richard Selman is working within the Forestry, Amenity and Lands Division and is again commenting on wildlife aspects of planning and developments, as well as CITES licences, bird conservation, other zoological advice, site protection for animals and wildlife crime. Aline Thomas, also in Forestry, Amenity and Lands, is responsible for leading on site protection, site casework and the consenting system on ASSIs, and management agreements. Fiona Gell and Laura Hanley are in the Fisheries Division, working on marine site and species protection, research and survey, and liaising with a wide range of marine stakeholders. Philippa Tomlinson continues working part-time on the Department's database and mapping system. Liz Charter is now responsible for developing biodiversity policy and strategies as well as building support, advocacy and liaising with bodies inside and outside Government, working from Corporate Services Division. These divisions of DEFA now share the responsibility for biodiversity delivery.

Liz Charter

EVENT

Saturday August 7th
From Barnacles to Basking sharks.

Coastal walk with Fiona Gell and Eleanor Stone

Meet by Niarbyl Cafe
14.00.

Natural History and Antiquarian Society
Contact Fiona Gell
fiona.gell@gov.im

NEWS FLASH

Humpback whale sighting by Manx Basking Shark Watch on 23rd July - 6 miles off Peel.



Photo by Hannah Keogh



Left to right, Peter McEvoy, Fiona Gell, Richard Selman, Liz Charter, Aline Thomas, Philippa Tomlinson and Laura Hanley. Outside new office at Thie Slieau Whallian.

DEFA Rheyinn Chymmyltaght, Bee as Eirinys
The Department of Environment,
Food and Agriculture



**Isle of Man
Government**

Reiltys Eilan Vannin



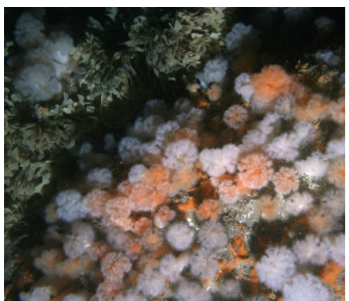
Purple milk vetch, a plant of coastal grassland in the south of the Island. Photo: P McEvoy



Caddis fly larvae, an indicator of clean water, Photo: Calum McNeil



Diverse seabed with horse mussels, sponges and corals. Photo: Bangor University.



The Manx seabed north of the Point of Ayre: Plumose anemones and hornwrack (not a plant but a strange colonial animal!). Photo: Bangor University.

International Year of Biodiversity- what are you doing for wildlife?

The United Nations declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity for our lives. Everyone is invited to take action in 2010 to safeguard the variety of life on earth: biodiversity. There are many events on the Island being run by the many of DEFA's partners in conservation; the Manx Wildlife Trust, the Manx Bat Group, Manx Birdlife, Manx Basking Shark Watch, Wildflowers of Mann, the Manx Natural History and Antiquarian Society, Manx Butterfly Conservation and Manx Ornithological Society. DEFA wants to hear what you are doing for biodiversity, in your garden, through your work, at school or on holiday. Email Liz.charter@gov.im. For ideas see www.biodiversityislife.net/?q=do-one-thing

Liz Charter



Manx Nature Conservation Forum

The Forum consists of representatives from each of the wildlife and countryside groups. It meets quarterly to discuss key biodiversity issues with DEFA and agree on joint initiatives to promote biodiversity and disseminate scientific information. It is also an important opportunity for DEFA to give updates on the Department's policies and priorities. At recent meetings a number of sub-groups were set up by the Forum members. These include a well established Biological Recording Working Group, and the recent addition of a Communication Working Group and Field Margin Enhancement Working Group. The Forum also holds open public meetings from time to time. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for these events or would like to add agenda items or contribute to the work of the Forum please contact me. DEFA acts as Secretariat for the Forum.

Aline Thomas

Marine Conservation Update

In the past year there have been some exciting developments in the information available about the Manx marine environment which can help make decisions about marine conservation and management. In April a report on the first comprehensive survey of Manx waters was produced by Bangor University fisheries scientists working together with DEFA marine conservation staff. Over 15,000 photographs were taken of the Manx seabed from over 100 sites and the study reveals the high diversity of habitats and species in Manx waters. Highlights from the survey include some healthy maerl beds (a special type of coral-like seaweed), new areas of horse mussel reef which are of European interest and newly discovered areas of Sabellaria reef which are created by worms which lay down delicate tubes in muddy seabeds.

Local divers have also been making a very valuable contribution to our knowledge on marine habitats. Around 35 local divers are now qualified as Seasearch divers and they have completed over 100 seabed surveys collecting vital information on marine species and habitats. Earlier this Summer Seasearch divers confirmed the presence of an eelgrass beds off Port Lewaigue, South of Ramsey. This is exciting news as eelgrass is a protected species and a marine habitat high conservation value.

The Bangor Marine Habitat report can be found on the Bangor University website: www.bangor.ac.uk/~oss801/

Dr Fiona Gell

The Rio Convention

DAFF undertook a very successful and conclusive consultation on whether the island should have the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity extended to it. Of the 107 responses 91% were fully supportive or positive, 4% were negative, not seeing the need for the move, 2.5% had reservations and 2.5% gave no opinion. The proposal to request that the UK extend the Convention coverage to us was agreed in Council of Ministers after further consultation with MHK and MLCs. The next stage is to make a case to the UK showing how far the Island meets the Convention. DAFF commissioned a report in 2004 into the extent of our compliance and this is being up-dated. It is hoped that we will have the report submitted and a response by the New Year.

Liz Charter



Ravens and sheep

Reports of raven attacks on sheep have arisen for two years, on lambs, and on ewes stuck on their backs, so farmers are looking to protect their stock against a species which is not on the General Licence for bird control for economic purposes. The problem appears to be large flocks of non-breeding birds that cannot be driven away by a territorial pair. The Wildlife Act allows emergency action and scaring but a licence is necessary for ongoing lethal control.

If a farmer finds a ewe being attacked by a raven then they can take action at that time to protect their stock. This removes rogue birds. Once a problem is identified, a licence is required to take further lethal action. Raven-scaring can be undertaken without a licence and if started before February nesting may help to dissipate ravens without resorting to lethal control when there are dependent young. Scaring should incorporate variety and unpredictability, moving scarers, changing timing and methods. A Scareyman model can be borrowed from the Department on trial. Human presence on site is most effective.

Sometimes a lethal threat may be necessary to make scaring effective: if there is serious damage during lambing, an application may be made to kill a small number of ravens to back up the scaring. Details should be provided, on the threat, scaring undertaken and any losses. A visit by animal health and biodiversity officers will consider management recommendations to reduce the problem, and where appropriate agree a licence. We are interested to hear about experiences of this nature to gather evidence and develop a balanced view.

Dr Richard Selman

Mapping our wildflowers

2010 has been a busy botanical year so far. The 'New Flora of the Isle of Man' is in its second year of survey, with a number of exciting species recorded, including new sites for ivy-leaved bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*), pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*), and bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and new Island records for tor-grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) blunt-flowered rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and (as yet unconfirmed) slender-tufted sedge (*Carex elata*). There are still many areas to explore and undoubtedly more new species to be recorded. Willing volunteers with an interest in wildflower recording can get more information by contacting Peter McEvoy on 01624 695742. DEFA is a partner in this project with Wildflowers of Mann, Manx Wildlife Trust, the Centre for Manx Studies and others.

Dr Peter McEvoy



Foxgloves are the source of the important heart drug Digoxin, which cannot be synthesized. Photo: Liz Charter



Frogs are our only native amphibian. They and their places of shelter—ponds, are protected. Photo: Liz Charter



Sheep grazing below Eary Cushlin. Photo: Liz Charter



Ivy-leaved bell flower. Photo: BSBI