

Alderney Wildlife

WOODLAND EXPLORERS

Read all about our Woodland Explorers programme and what 'wild' activities we got up to!

A NATTER ABOUT BATS AND HABITATS

Discover one of Alderney's more elusive species...the Natterer's Bat!



Winter 2023 | Habitats

Protecting Alderney's wildlife for the future.

Welcome

The beauty of Winter!

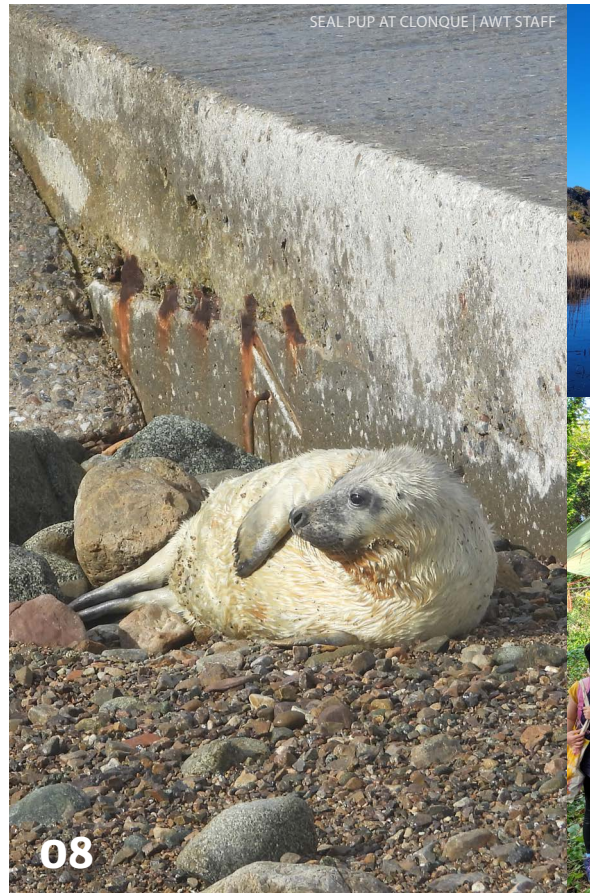


And just like that... Winter is here and another year has gone by!

One of the magical elements of the changing seasons is the evolving beauty around us, and as the natural world shifts quickly from one month to another, it can be easy to miss it. This is especially true for the coldest season. While some symbolism of Winter includes negative connotations such as 'sorrow' or 'hardships', in other cultures it represents wisdom, peace and inner harmony. With the days having grown shorter, remember that we are able to spend longer staring at the stars and (with Alderney's lower-than-the-mainland light pollution) aren't they a sight to see!

Despite some of our ecological surveys finishing up for the winter period, we've had a busy few months at the Trust. Our team headed over to Sark for the annual Inter-Island Environment Meeting, we supported the Alderney Animal Welfare Society (AAWS) with the monitoring of a surprise seal pup and, of course, Storm Ciarán gave us a visit.

I have spoken about how incredible Alderney's wildlife is many times over the last two years, but for this issue we thought we'd put the spotlight on the habitats that help that wildlife thrive. The ponds at Longis and Mannez, which brim with dragonflies, amphibians and birds, and the human-made WW2 fortifications that now may possibly support one of our rarer bat species. With the recent storms, we'll also bring your attention to the habitats



SEAL PUP AT CLONQUE | AWT STAFF

which act as natural flood defenses, helping to protect the island's natural world as well as its economy.

Finally, on a personal note, this is my last editorial for Alderney Wildlife and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our members for supporting the Trust over the years. Seeing first-hand what the AWT Team do to protect and restore the island's beautiful wildlife, I can say that your ongoing support truly keeps us moving forward.

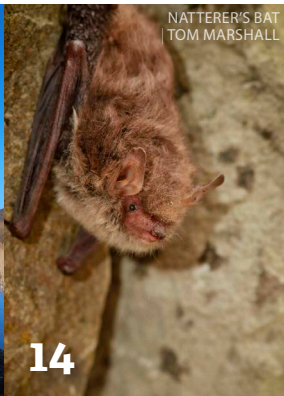
From the bottom of my heart, thank you!

Rowie Burcham
Outreach Officer





MANNEZ POND
| ROWIE BURCHAM



NATTERER'S BAT
| TOM MARSHALL



THE WOODLAND EXPLORERS
| ROWIE BURCHAM

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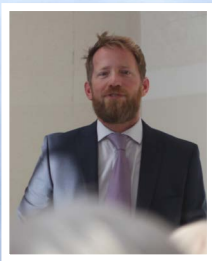
Looking for a fun and festive activity? Read here to find out how to make dazzling ice decorations.

21 Winter Wildlife Detectives

Cut out our spotting sheet, wrap up warm and head outside to discover the winter's wonderful wildlife!

22 Six Places to see Terrific Trees

Recently, the Alderney Community Woodland was included in the Wildlife Trusts top places to see winter trees!



Manager's Report

The Manager's Report in this issue of Alderney Wildlife is going to be dedicated to a man who not only helped to establish the AWT, but who went on to play a central role in its 22 year history. **Brian Bonnard was a leading naturalist in the Channel Islands.** Born in 1930, Brian showed an early interest in natural history and went on to studied botany at university where he met his wife Jean.

Whilst Brian maintained a keen interest in botany throughout his life, immediately after leaving university, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corp as part of his national service, before going into the police where he took part in the Queen's Coronation. Subsequently he became an analytical chemist, and then moved into animal pharmaceuticals. Jean and Brian moved to Guernsey in the early 1980s and there Brian's passion for botany once again came to the fore when Jean and he joined the botanical section of La Société Guernesaise. In the early 1980s, La Société was raising funds to help build a new headquarters and Brian brought his business skills to help oversee the project, as well as liaising with the Museum services. In 1986 the new headquarters, built as an extension to the Candie Garden's Museum, was formally opened.

As part of La Société's botanical section Brian visited Alderney in the late 1980's, to talk about the Guernsey tree survey. During this visit he recalled how they found the smaller island's pace of life and clean air to their liking, and they made their move to Alderney soon after.

Once here, Brian took on the role of Alderney Recorder for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). He created the first compilation of historical botanical records for the island, as well as systematically surveying the island's plants himself. He compiled these records in his book, the 'Flora of Alderney', and a fascinating website. Brian also took a creative interest in the island as a whole, writing 'Out and About on Alderney', which for many years helped introduce visitors to the Island's history and secret places, but also histories of World War II and shipwrecks around the island.

"He created the first compilation of historical botanical records for the island, as well as systematically surveying the island's plants himself."

Brian felt strongly that the island's wildlife was what made it a particularly special British island. He established that Alderney had more wildflowers per

square metre than almost any other part of Britain (by area) and felt strongly that Alderney should protect its wildlife. He campaigned for nearly 30 years for the creation of a wildlife act, regularly speaking at Chief Pleas and gaining the support of the States of Alderney on several occasions. Sadly, at the time of his death no law had yet been drafted.

After Jean's death at the beginning of the new millennium, Brian threw himself into his passions, which included being instrumental in the establishment of the Alderney Wildlife Trust, of which he became a founding director in 2002. At the Trust's launch he shared the stage with David Bellamy and subsequently went on to be both its Treasurer and its President. When he stood down from his role on the Board in 2020, the Trust recognised his contributions, appointing him Hon. President for life.

Brian formed a special companionship with long-term friend Anne Low, and over the last 20 years became a part of her fam-

ily's life. Anne and Brian shared a passion for Alderney, but also loved exploring the world, with some of their favourite trips including Norway, Egypt, Croatia and Montenegro. In the last years of his life Brian suffered the ravages of dementia and through the hardest of these times Anne's support provided him with an anchor against this terrible disease.

“Brian felt strongly that the island's wildlife was what made it a particularly special British island.”

Brian loved his adopted island and contributed hugely to the community's understanding and care of its natural environment. Yet despite knowing the island better than most he described his favourite place as his own garden at Platte Saline, where he recalled seeing more birds per square metre than anywhere else.

By *Roland Gawain*, CEO



BRIAN AT HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY

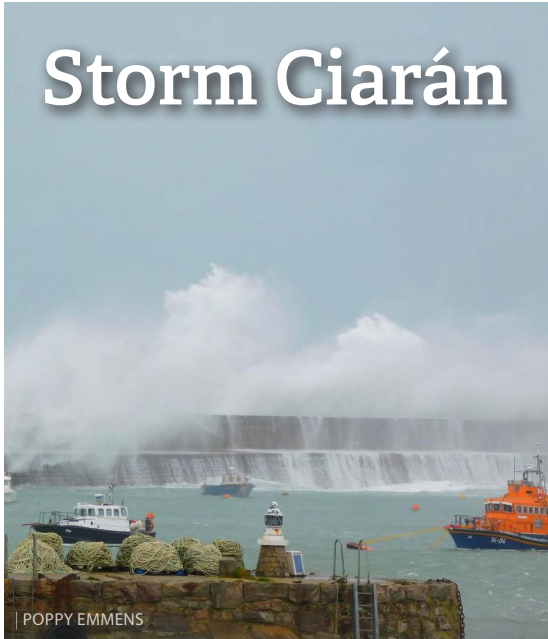


BRIAN LEADING A BOTANICAL WALK AT THE AWT'S LAUNCH IN 2002

WILD NEWS

All the latest news from Alderney Wildlife Trust

Storm Ciarán



POPPY EMMENS

AS MANY of you will be aware, Alderney was hit by Storm Ciarán at the beginning of November, with the airport, St. Anne's School and many shops and hospitality businesses closing while the worst of it hit us. At its peak, the storm definitely put Alderney Electricity's four new weather stations to the test!

In preparation for the storm, our staff and volunteers were busy ensuring the Trust's tractors and vehicles were protected, closed Longis and Mannez Bird Hides and secured any Trust facilities. In the following days, they also worked hard clearing trees and checking our reserves for any damage. We'd like to say thank you to all the volunteers who came out to help with these tasks!

Moth Mayhem

IN NOVEMBER, we opened the Essex Farm moth trap for the last time this year! Since March, we have hosted our Moth Trap Mornings for the community and visitors to discover the island's incredible moth species. During these sessions, we also recorded the moths found and this data feeds into the UK's Butterfly Conservation and Garden Moth Scheme.

In 2023, our volunteers have:

- Put out **two weekly moth traps for 36 nights** at different locations across the island.
- Discovered **four new species** of macro moth for the island!
- **Recorded 7,054 moths** across both locations (with 768 in a single night!)
- Spent approximately **60 hours recording species**.



POPLAR HAWK-MOTH | ROWIE BURCHAM



MOTH TRAP MORNING | ROWIE BURCHAM



Fight the Fig!

WE'D LIKE to thank the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers, Alderney Scouts Group and the members of the community who came to help with invasive species removal at Saye!

With thirty incredible volunteers in total, **we cleared an amazing three tonnes of Sour Fig** from the sand dunes. This plant forms dense, impenetrable carpets which threatens Alderney's native flora, leading to a monopolisation of the landscape and wider ecological impacts.

What's that BRUV doing?

WITH THE help of University of Exeter student Mike Clarke, in September, a BRUV was deployed in Longis Bay and we now have footage revealing the island's underwater world. A BRUV is a 'Baited Remote Underwater Video', a popular type of equipment used in coastal research, which uses bait to attract fish into the view of a remotely controlled camera.

So far, we've discovered that Two Spotted Goby's favour seaweed habitats, which also act as nursery grounds for larger species. Whereas, adult fish (especially Sea Bream) are more frequent in sea-grass habitats. Furthermore, sandy areas had fewer fish, but were still shown to be important with Mullet seen scraping the sand to feed.



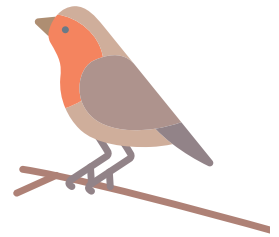
Wildlife Trusts Assemble!

IN SEPTEMBER, the AWT Team travelled to Sark to attend this year's Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM), which sees delegates from wildlife organisations discuss the status of the islands' environments and help plan for the future.

The IIEM first started in 2000 and this year was extra special as we had the amazing opportunity to meet the teams representing **Manx Wildlife Trust** and **Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust**. Being one of 46 Wildlife Trusts, we love getting the chance to meet with our partner organisations face-to-face. Between presentations, we also got to discover beautiful Sark by exploring Guiliot Caves, L'Eperquerie and the Stocks Permaculture Garden!



Top Sightings



Hooded Crow



HOODED CROW | DANIEL WHITELEGG

AT THE end of September, a Hooded Crow was spotted at Kiln Farm and was the first of the year! Once thought of as the same species as the Carrion Crow, it can be identified by its lighter body in contrast to the head, tail and wings. However, they are as equally clever and hybridisation between the species has been recorded frequently.

In Europe, the Hooded Crow only breeds in Eastern Europe, but can be found in the north of the UK and Isle of Man (while the Carrion Crow frequents the south). In the winter some individuals may move south and on Alderney, there have only ever been six recorded with the last being in 2021!

Funky Fungi

WE'VE HAD a few species of funky fungi recorded this autumn and winter! Including the species below (L-R): False Saffron Milkcap, Witches Butter and Witches Hat (Blackening Waxcap). Forming its own Kingdom (and the most populous at that), fungi have many different and essential roles in the ecosystem, such as breaking down organic matter, being a food source for wildlife and nutrient recycling. Some species also have very interesting pasts!

For instance, historically in Europe, if the Witches Butter fungus appeared near a home it was believed that a curse had been put on the family living there!

Our staff and volunteers have enjoyed learning all about these different species as they've been recorded throughout the season! Don't forget to add any wildlife or fungi that you've seen to the Sightings Book in our Wildlife Information Centre on Victoria Street!



FALSE SAFFRON MILKCAP | POPPY ENMENS



WITCHES BUTTER | ALEX PURDIE



WITCHES HAT (BLACKENING WAXCAP) | JOE MARTEL



GREY SEAL PUP | AWT STAFF



GREY SEAL PUP | AWT STAFF



GREY SEAL PUP | AWT STAFF

ON THE 20th of October, a Grey Seal pup was seen resting on the Clonque Causeway! It still had its white fluffy coat (called 'lanugo'), which isn't fully water-proof, but helps to keep seal pups warm while they're gaining their natural fat to insulate them against the cold waters. The presence of lanugo with this pup indicated its age to be a few weeks so it was not yet old enough to swim long distances.

Despite this, it was seen splashing about and (quite literally) testing the waters for short periods before returning to Clonque for a rest. After the first report of the pup, the Alderney Animal Welfare Society (AAWS) led on monitoring the individual with support from BDMLR Channel Islands, the Landmark Trust and ourselves. These efforts stopped on Halloween after the seal pup headed out into the water and didn't return for 72 hours. Good luck little guy!



Slow Worm

DID YOU know that Slow Worms are not actually worms but rather a legless lizard, making them Alderney's only reptile species! Unlike worms, Slow Worms have the ability to shed their tail and blink with their eyelids. They are smaller in size than snakes and have smooth golden-grey skin. While we know of their presence on the island (through past ecological surveys and public sightings), exact numbers are unknown.

This juvenile individual was found at the end of September in someone's kitchen in Corvee. After giving the human resident a small surprise, the Slow Worm was released safely back into its natural habitat by the Trust staff.



JUVENILE SLOW WORM
| ROWIE BURCHAM

Woodland Explorers!

This summer Alderney's Team Wilder created a new habitat. The kind of habitat that children can explore and thrive in, alongside nature.

Nature disconnection is one of my concerns when we think about how we can protect our natural environment. To harness a Nature Connection throughout our life, research shows that we must have created a connection before the age of eight so I wanted to provide an opportunity for the youth of Alderney to immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, and benefits of Alderney's wildlife.

With thanks to the Guernsey Insurance Corporation Conservation Award and funding from the Youth Commission for Guernsey and Alderney, we set a mission to bring 20 young people aged 7-11, closer to nature. Nestled within Alderney's Community Woodland, we found a natural clearing that would become a temporary outdoor classroom.

We called this Woodland Explorers.

Calling on support from our Conservation Officer, volunteers and the local tree surgeon, together we transformed the site from a dense ivy covered sycamore wood, into a magical Forest School. Along the way, we created piles of ivy and sycamore branches that could be used by the children as resources throughout the week. We repurposed a tree trunk into wooden decorations, a log circle and a table, ensuring everything remained onsite as a habitat for the wildlife.

Among a variety of exciting activities, our Outreach Officer, Rowie, Ecologist, Matt,

and volunteer, Esme, led the children on a walk to discover the butterflies, spiders and moths living here.

It's important to encourage a deeper understanding of wildlife behaviour, species, and their habitats to help us all appreciate why leaving no trace matters, why we must be considerate, kind and helpful to what lives here if we want nature to thrive. Throughout the week, we were mindful of not leaving a permanent mark on the land. The children learned that painting in the outdoors can be done in an eco-friendly way by using berries, leaves and turmeric to dye, paint, and decorate wood and fabric. Dens were built, hotels were made for minibeasts out of natural resources, ensuring nothing unnatural was left behind, just the resources that were there to begin with for the wildlife to continue calling their home.

The Community Woodland provided the perfect safe space for the young people to connect with the trees, to play beneath the canopy, increasing confidence and resilience in themselves, and the outdoors. After each session, the children were asked to reflect on what they found most value in, with den building and discovering minibeasts they had never met before at the top. Upon completion of the week, I asked if they would be interested in helping to take care of our island in the future. The outcome? 100% of them said yes!

By *Abigail de Castella*, Team Wilder
Community Support Officer





THE WOODLAND EXPLORERS | ROWIE BURCHAM



HOLDING A BLUE UNDERWING MOTH | ABIGAIL DE CASTELLA



HAMMOCK HANGOUTS | ABIGAIL DE CASTELLA

“Dens were built, hotels were made for minibeasts out of natural resources, ensuring nothing unnatural was left behind”



DEN BUILDING | ROWIE BURCHAM



SAFE USE OF TOOLS | ROWIE BURCHAM



Pond-erings: Exploring Alderney's Aquatic Wonders

What Are Ponds?

Ponds, defined as small, still bodies of freshwater, stand in contrast to larger water bodies like lakes or rivers. Ponds can vary in shape, depth, and size, ranging from a single square metre to a much larger two hectares – that's roughly the size of two and a half football pitches! These water gems can be naturally formed, filled by under-water springs or rainwater, and some are lovingly crafted by human hands, with 80% of the UK's ponds residing in gardens.

Why are Ponds Important?

Ponds, often overlooked and underestimated, can be vibrant habitats brimming with life. Not just a pretty feature in our gardens, they play a pivotal role in maintaining biodiversity, offering a refuge for countless species of plants, animals, and insects. In fact, ponds support approximately two thirds of all UK freshwater species. Because of this, they can be used as important indicators of healthy environments. Ponds deprived of sensitive species that require

clean water and soil, such as dragonflies, frogs, and newts, and are dominated by invasive species, are indicative of a degraded environment. They also assist in mitigating the impacts of climate change by capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and can help cycle pollutants out of the water.

Ponds in Alderney: A Closer Look

Mannez Pond, the island's largest at 0.4 ha, was originally developed to excavate stone needed for the development of Alderney's Victorian fortifications. Today, it serves as a habitat for Alderney's two amphibian species, the common frog, and palmate newt, which use its waters for breeding during the springtime. Historically, Mannez has hosted the highest number of dragonfly species on the island, with Migrant Hawkers and Emperor dragonflies being a common sight during the summer months. As larva, dragonflies will prey on whatever they can find in Mannez's waters – tadpoles, snails and mosquito larvae to name a few! Their presence also provides a source of food for



RED-VEINED DARTER | AWT STAFF

Did you know:
Creating a garden pond (no matter how big or small) is one of the best ways you can help freshwater wildlife!



MANNEZ POND | ROWIE BURCHAM



PALMATE NEWT
| BOB FOX




COOT | DANIEL WHITELEGG

a range of bird species that frequent the pond, such as little grebes, swallows, coots, and even early emerging bats.

Longis Pond, or 'La Mare du Roe (King's Pond)', covers 0.2 ha. Although excavated by the Alderney Society in 1989, pollen analysis also indicates the presence of open water vegetation at the site some 3,800 years ago. As a groundwater pond, it sits exposed at the top of the water table, and therefore lacks any water-retaining capacity. Mannez and Longis Pond share many similar species, however, Longis maintains the island's only Phragmites reed bed. This plant provides an important site for reedbed species, such as the Sedge and Reed Warbler, which can be seen emerging from the reeds to perform their display flight to at-

tract females. Take a seat in Longis bird hide and you will see further birding delights, including the various migrant and wintering waterfowl, such as Snipe, Teal, Water Rail and Wigeon!

Ponds are not just picturesque features; they are essential habitats that support biodiversity, act as environmental indicators, and contribute to mitigating climate change. Exploring ponds, such as Mannez and Longis Ponds in Alderney, reveals the remarkable interplay of species and natural history that make these aquatic wonders truly fascinating and worthy of our protection.

By *Dr. Tara Cox*, Senior Ecologist
 @_TaraCox



A Natterer About Bats and Habitats

For much of Alderney's wildlife, winter means a change in both their activity and habitat use and there are few species groups for which this is more pronounced than the island's bats. This is very apparent in the Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*), one of our least common species. If you're out in the evening in the warmer months, for instance on one of our Bat and Hedgehog walks, the most likely bat you are to see are Common Pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*). These charismatic bats are often seen along roadways and under streetlamps, and are by far the most frequently recorded species on Alderney. During 2022, volunteers taking part in the Bailiwick Bat Survey recorded over 96,000 Common Pipistrelle echolocation calls. By contrast, we only recorded 156 calls from Natterer's bats, that's over 600 times fewer calls!

Part of this numerical difference comes down to foraging habitat; Pipistrelles love edges, foraging along

tree lines and roads where large numbers of small midge-like insects congregate in the air. By contrast, Natterer's are 'gleaners', capable of coming within centimetres of crashing into vegetation to snatch spiders, large flies, and beetles from the surface of leaves. This specialism for more cluttered environments means Natterer's tend to prefer foraging in woodland habitats, something Alderney has relatively little of, and explains why we record fewer of this species. These woodlands also make up a key roosting habitat for Natterer's, with tree cavities as well as buildings being a favoured roost for the summer months.

"At least some Natterer's may roost in something Alderney has in abundance: WW2 fortifications."

Come the winter, lower insect numbers mean that our bats need to hibernate to survive. A bat's heart-beat can drop to as little as twenty beats per minute, about one fiftieth

of the rate in flight, and their body temperature can drop substantially to conserve energy. Unnecessarily waking from these bouts of dormancy wastes a lot of energy for a bat, and too many disruptions can mean individuals struggle to make it through the winter. Natterer's minimise this risk by choosing cool, thermally-stable cave-like habitats for their winter roosts: places where they are less likely to be awoken by disturbance or small temperature fluctuations. Quite some change from the woodlands they spend their summers in!

However, Alderney is not covered with caves, so what do the island's Natterer's do in the winter? We don't completely know, but at least some Natterer's may roost in something Alderney has in abundance: WW2 fortifications. Hibernation roost surveys conducted in 2017 showed some evidence for this, and a handful of unassessed sites have the right characteristics of thermal and humidity stability that they could be good roosts. Fully investigating the importance of these areas for this particularly sensitive period of a bat's life is

key to understanding how to conserve them on Alderney. Although, doing so is fraught with risks of disturbing the bats so should only be done by trained bat workers. This is an area the AWT is keen to investigate in future, working with partners within and beyond the Channel Islands. The Bailiwick Bat Survey (a citizen-science project) continues next year as well, and you can volunteer to deploy a bat detector to help us monitor Alderney's bat populations!

By *Matt Lewis*, Ecologist and Biodiversity Centre Manager



NATTERER'S BAT | TOM MARSHALL

Did you know:
Bats are the second largest group of mammal in the world, with 1,400 species! The smallest has a wingspan of approximately 170 millimetres and the largest is on average 5 metres! Neither of these are found on Alderney!



MATT DEPLOYING HIS BAT DETECTOR



VOLUNTEERS LEAH AND STELLA WITH THEIR BAT DETECTOR | LORNA WEST



Coastal Grasslands: Alderney's Silent Beauty



WESTERN CLOVER | BRIAN EVERSHAM



THRIFT | AWT STAFF



GREATER BROOMRAPE | AWT STAFF

One thing that Alderney is well known for is its varied and diverse plant life. Before the last Ice Age Alderney was connected to the Cotentin Peninsula in France, meaning that there are some European species present here that are considered rare in the UK, as well as some endemic species: Alderney Sea Lavender and Alderney Geranium, that are only found in specific locations on the island.

Around the coastline of Alderney there are patches of grassland that are very exposed to the wind and salt spray from the sea. Due to this only certain species can grow in these conditions, including Autumn Squill, Thrift, Wild Thyme, Western Clover, Kidney Vetch and the curious Greater Broomrape, which has no chlorophyll and parasitises the Prostrate Broom that grows along the clifftops. Some of the best places to find these plants on Alderney include along the South Cliffs, on Longis Common, Braye Common and along the eastern section of the coast path near Houmet Herbe.

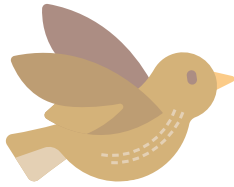
One of the threats to this habitat on Alderney is the presence of an invasive non-native species. Sour Fig is a succulent plant that is native to South Africa, and is believed to have been introduced to Alderney either as ornamental ground cover in private gardens or to cover up bunkers after the war.

Since then it has rapidly spread over grassland habitats on the cliffs and dunes and now covers 2.6% of the island's area.

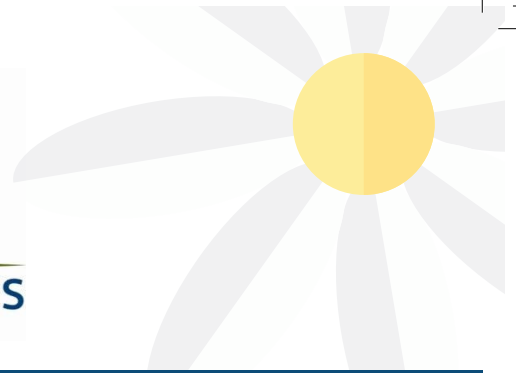
When it covers an area, it smothers native plants and also alters the properties of the soil to prevent other plant species from growing there. It's for this reason that we have a large volunteer effort to remove the Sour Fig from the worst affected areas of the island, to try and prevent this plant from impacting our native species any further.

By Poppy Emmens, Reserves Officer

📷 @wild_poppyy



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The St Peters Trust Group has its headquarters in Guernsey with a second office located in the island of Alderney offering high quality bespoke services to its clients through the appropriate use of international planning and structuring, providing assistance and support to its clients requiring estate planning, asset protection, and enhancement of private and family wealth.

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- The Blonde Hedgehog
- The Georgian House
- The Old Tea Room
- Youth Commission of Guernsey & Alderney

Alderney's Natural Flood Defences: Saving the Island Millions of Pounds



Hurricane force winds have battered our island this autumn, with a peak of 104 mph during Storm Ciaran (data from AEL - Alderney Electricity). The damage caused, whilst awful, would have been significantly worse without the island's natural coastal defences, which come at no cost compared to the millions we would need to spend on equivalent artificial defences. Met Office predictions indicate the frequency and intensity of storms will increase, so it is more important than ever to preserve our existing (and free!) coastal defences. This article describes some of our most important defences, their value, and what we can do to protect them for the future.

Sand Dunes

Whilst large waves battered our beaches during the storm, Marram grass sand dunes were a near impenetrable barrier to their damaging effects. Dunes are at half of Alderney's large beaches and, in Saye and Braye in particular, these are invaluable. Without dunes, it is highly likely that infrastructure behind these beaches would have suffered storm surges and erosion, resulting

in flooding and physical damage to roads and houses, costing thousands, if not millions, of pounds – not to mention danger and disruption to islanders.

Kelp Forests & Eelgrass Beds

Before swell crashes into our coastline, marine habitats have already absorbed huge amounts of energy. Kelp forests surround the majority of Alderney's coastline and during storms these forests of large fronds act like a crumple zone in a car, ripping out and absorbing energy from the waves as they go. Eelgrass beds have a network of roots which trap sediment forming raised areas, underwater sand dunes if you will, acting as physical barriers to waves. Together these habitats reduce sediment drift and the intensity of waves and storm surges before they reach us.

Value to the Economy

With sea walls and defences at a construction cost of £1,000-30,000 per m2 (based on existing UK projects), a sea defence capable of replacing dunes may cost at Saye nearly £12 million, and at Braye £182 million. Consid-



STORM CIARAN
| ALEX PURDIE



The Wheelers Bay to Bonchurch seawall on the Isle of Wight is part of a coast protection scheme which was opened in 1987 | IoW Centre for the Coastal Environment



The sand dunes at Saye act as a natural flood defence for the island | Alex Purdie

ering the financial implications of building we often face here the cost may be much higher. Dunes are also valuable where we have existing German defences (e.g. Platte Saline and Longis). They protect the walls from damage and overtop them in places. It can cost thousands if not millions to increase the size, or simply repair existing sea walls. And this is just installation costs! In Jersey they estimate they will spend nearly £100 million maintaining existing defences over the next 100 years.

In a period when the island's budget is under such pressure with financial needs from key sectors such as transport and healthcare, the value of maintaining our free and effective natural coastal defences is a no brainer!

Threats & Conservation Actions

The main threats to Eelgrass and kelp come from increased storm frequency itself, so reducing human pressure on them (e.g. pollution, anchoring) is our best defence. Sand dunes are under attack from Sour Fig. The invasive plant smothers Marram grass creating a weak layer of rotten plant and

shallow roots which are easily ripped away during storms. Fortunately, Sour fig can be pulled up. In one AWT & Guernsey Conservation Volunteer session almost 400 m2 of Sour fig was cleared from the dunes at Saye. If you would like to get involved in sour fig removal or coastal erosion surveys pop into our visitor centre or email us.

For both ecological and financial reasons, Alderney needs to protect these habitats, for the future of our coastline and those of us who live around it.

By *Alex Purdie*, Ramsar Officer

 @AlexPurdie6

Data taken from:
 - AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited (2020) Jersey Shoreline Management Plan
 - Environment Agency (2015) Cost estimation for coastal protection – summary of evidence.
 - Met Office (2021) Recent trends and future projections of UK storm activity



WATCH

Create Festive Ice Decorations

Bring some festive cheer to your outdoor space with these beautiful and simple ornaments! Perfect for a crafty day, all ages can get involved with this seasonal activity!

What You Need

- Saucers (or a bowl with a flat bottom)
- A kettle (the water will need boiling first to prevent bubbles)
- Natural materials, such as leaves, grass and berries
- Some string
- A freezer



Instructions

- 1) On a flat surface, lay the piece of string along the bottom of the saucer and make sure a long part is left hanging over the edge
- 2) Arrange the natural materials in the saucer
- 3) Gently, pour in the cooled water. Afterwards, the contents might need rearranging
- 4) Put the saucer in a freezer overnight
- 5) In the morning, to remove the decoration you may need to put the saucer in room temperature water
- 6) Hang the decorations in your garden or window and enjoy watching them!





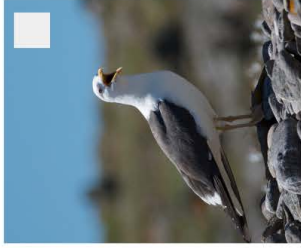
Winter Wildlife Detectives



One Grey Seal
Bobbing



Two Winter
Heliotrope Flowering



Three Different
Gull Species Flying



Four Red Robins
Calling



Five Rabbits
Running



Six Fungi
Standing



Seven Holly Trees
Swaying



Eight Blackbirds
Scampering



Nine Starfish
Slithering



Ten Oystercatchers
Piping

Photo Credit: Grey Seal - Joshua Copping / Winter Heliotrope - Lindsay Pyne - Lesser Black-Backed Gull - AWT Volunteer / Robin - AWT Volunteer / Rabbit - Bill Black / Parasol Mushroom - AWT Volunteer / Holly Tree - Philip Precey / Blackbird - AWT Volunteer / Cushion Starfish - AWT Volunteer / Oystercatchers - Vic Froome

6 places to see terrific trees

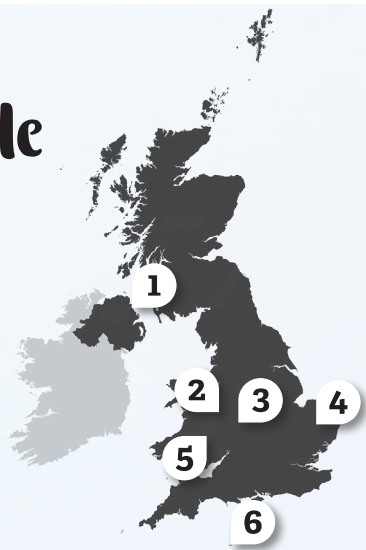
Trees are impressive at any time of year. They can live for centuries, the shape of their trunks and branches telling the story of their long lives. Some grow tall, others wide and sprawling, creating natural, living statues.

Winter is a wonderful time to discover the UK's old and unusual trees, as many have shed their leaves, revealing the unique shapes beneath. Here are six Wildlife Trust nature reserves where the trees have a story to tell.

You can discover even more at [wildlifetrusts.org/ancient-trees](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/ancient-trees)



See the spectacle for yourself!



1 Glenarm, Ulster Wildlife

One of Europe's best examples of wooded river valley and parkland, with large numbers of ancient and veteran oak trees. Keep an eye out for signs of mammals including red squirrels, pine martens and badgers.

Where: Glenarm, BT44 0BD

2 The Hollies, Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A spellbinding grove of ancient hollies, perched on the edge of the Stiperstones. Each windswept tree is a unique character. Some are three or four centuries old, wizened and creaking with age.

Where: Snailbeach, SY5 0NS

3 Moseley Bog, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust

Moseley Bog is a gateway to Middle Earth. The gnarled old trees were a favourite of author JRR Tolkien, who lived nearby. They provided the inspiration for the old forests in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

Where: Birmingham, B13 9JX

4 Hethel Old Thorn, Norfolk Wildlife Trust

The Wildlife Trusts' smallest nature reserve is just large enough to protect a single, very special tree. Hethel Old Thorn is thought to be one of the oldest hawthorns in England. Legend has it that the tree grew from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea.

Where: Wymondham, NR14 8HE

5 Cwm Byddog, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

One of the top 20 ancient tree sites in Wales, with some trees thought to be up to 800 years old. One mighty oak has a girth of 6.3m, whilst there's an alder with a 5m girth. With so many old trees, it's also a great place to see lichens.

Where: Powys, HR3 5SL

6 Alderney Community Woodland, Alderney Wildlife Trust

This may not be the oldest woodland on our list, but these trees tell a story. Many of Alderney's trees were felled by the Nazi's during WWII, so the Trust has planted over 12,000 trees to bring the woodland back. This history is evident in the Community Woodland, with several bunkers on the reserve.

Where: Les Rochers, Alderney

Thank you

Your support is vital for protecting Alderney's wildlife!
alderneywildlife.org/support-us/donate



FRONT COVER: JELLY EAR FUNGUS | DR TARA COX
BACK COVER: CURLEW & OYSTERCATCHER | ESME COLES

Champion, Study, Protect

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