

2024 Roundup



Curlews are **red** listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BOCC) because of a rapid decline in the breeding population over a short space of time. Thankfully they are doing well on the Ayres NNR and 18 pairs bred across the reserve in 2024. Ten pairs nested in the vicinity of Ballaghennie and of these **six pairs fledged** at least one young; one pair failed when the chicks were approximately 19 days old and the outcome couldn't be determined for three pairs after chicks reached 23 to 27 days old (curlew chicks fledge at around 32 to 38 days dependant on prey availability). At Rue Point, **4 pairs fledged** at least one young; two pairs failed when the chicks were approximately 14 days old and the chicks of another pair were monitored up to 29 days of age and its likely that at least one of these went on to fledge.

The first **little terns** for the season were recorded at Rue Point on the 21st April. The majority of early clutches laid between the 20th May and 8th June were predated by hedgehogs but one clutch made it to hatching and two chicks fledged from this location. Seventeen clutches were laid further along the coast from the 3rd June onwards and nine chicks fledged from this location. The final figures were 15 pairs nesting producing **11 fledged young** giving a productivity 0.73. Little tern require a productivity 0.75 to maintain their population density and the average productivity for Manx little terns over the past 27 years is 0.45; the colony is being sustained by recruitment from other little tern colonies around the Irish sea. Little terns are **red** listed on BOCCIoM and **amber** listed on BOCC5.



Ringed plover are **amber** listed on BOCCIoM and **red** listed on BOCC5. Thirty-nine nests were recorded in 2024. Eight pairs nested at the Point of Ayre (privately owned) and many of these pairs successfully hatched chicks and some went on to fledge. Chicks also fledged on the NNR but there was insufficient time to adequately monitor them to determine the number of breeding pairs and productivity. Ringed plover can lay up to three clutches of eggs, if early clutches of eggs fail, per breeding season and it is therefore challenging to establish the number of breeding pairs and productivity.

Oystercatcher are **red** listed on BOCCIoM and **amber** listed on BOCC5. In 2024, 33 nests were monitored and of these 25 hatched and the majority of these went on to fledge at least one young. There was insufficient time to monitor the number of chicks that fledged per pair.



At the Point of Ayre (privately owned) 30 pairs of **Arctic tern** produced **15 fledged young**. However the colony abandoned the Point of Ayre around the 18th July; usually Arctic terns flock up and the recently fledged young are seen practicing fishing close to shore before the colony migrates south. It's not known what caused the sudden disappearance of the colony from the Point of Ayre. The main threats to the colony are brown rats, cats, human disturbance and prey availability. Arctic tern are **red** listed on the BOCCIoM and BOCC5.

No specific monitoring was undertaken for **skylark** **red** listed BOCCIoM and BOCC5, **meadow pipit** **red** listed BOCCIoM and **amber** listed BOCC5, **linnet** **red** listed BOCCIoM and BOCC5 and **stonechat** **green** listed due to the spring flooding but they appeared to be nesting in good numbers across the NNR.



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The flood water provided nesting opportunities for **moorhen** **amber** BOCCIoM, **coot** **amber** BOCCIoM, **mallard** **amber** BOCCIoM and **shoveler** **amber** BOCCIoM.

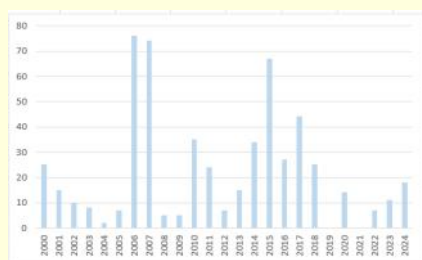
Sparrowhawk **green**, **kestrel** **red** BOCCIoM **amber** BOCC5, **long-eared owl** **red** BOCCIoM **green** BOCC5 and **raven** **green** all nested on the NNR.



There were fairly regular **short-eared owl** (**red** BOCCIoM) sightings in May. Single **marsh harriers** (**amber** BOCC5) were seen in April, May and July. Passage **osprey** (**amber** BOCC5) were recorded in April and May. A flock of 11 non-breeding **chough** (**amber** BOCCIoM) were recorded feeding on the NNR throughout the breeding season and this increased to 20 chough post-breeding season. A post-breeding flock of up to 300 **kittiwake** (**red** BOCCIoM and BOCC5) were present during July. The large **eider** (**red** BOCCIoM) flock of up to 300, that usually resides at the Point of Ayre relocated to Rue Point in late June. **Arctic skua's** (**red** BOCC5) showed regularly in June and July with five recorded on one occasion. The usual large

passage of **sanderling** **amber**, **dunlin** **red** BOCC5 and **ringed plover** took place in April, late July and August with feeding activity seen along the entire beach of the NNR. A few of the larger waders were occasionally recorded including **black-tailed godwit** **red** BOCCIoM, **bar-tailed godwit** **red** BOCCIoM, **redshank** **red** BOCCIoM and **knot** **red** BOCCIoM.

The **Scarce Crimson and Gold moth** *Pyrausta sanguinalis* is an endangered (based on pre 1994 IUCN guidelines), **red** listed micro-moth only found at the Ayres NNR, a few sites on the



north coast of Northern Ireland and the Burren, Republic of Ireland. The moth was recorded in low numbers on four days between the 1st June and the 7th July in a very restricted location. Checks were made for the moth at its former locations during its flight season but none were found. This tiny, day-flying moth is difficult to monitor and best conditions are no wind and bright sun.



The **heath bee fly** *Bombylius minor* is **red** listed and categorised as vulnerable (based on 2001 IUCN guidelines). 2024 was an exceptional year for the heath bee fly, it was recorded in good numbers from the Point of Ayre to the Lhen, a range of 8km. Steve Crellin, Cindy Scale and Pete Hadfield contributed to the recording effort for this species.

The warm, sandy soils at the Ayres NNR provide a perfect environment for invertebrates and **thirty Nationally Scarce** invertebrate species have been recorded on the Ayres. There is insufficient time and expertise to monitor all of these species regularly but Pete Hadfield and Steve Crellin recorded the Nationally Scarce **dune villa** *Villa modesta* on the NNR and Sue Harvey recorded the Nationally Scarce **beach pill woodlouse** *Armadillidium album*; this rare woodlouse lives on sandy beaches.



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A new site was found for the liverwort, **cavernous crystalwort** *Riccia cavernosa*. This plant has only been recorded from the Ayres on the Isle of Man.



Hare's-foot clover *Trifolium arvense* **red** listed POCCLoM was found close to the parking area at Smeale. It was last recorded on the NNR in 2006. An ephemeral plant of bare sand.



The rare fern, **moonwort** *Botrychium lunaria* **Amber** listed POCCLoM was found on the NNR, following an absence of six years.



2024 was a poor year for the **red** listed POCCLoM **field gentian**. In the past this plant has boomed when conditions have been favourable but it suffers in droughts and floods. In recent years this plant has only been recorded at the Ayres and has died out from its former locations on the Isle of Man.



Legally protected **common lizards** were recorded in good numbers on the wooden stobs at the sides of the Ballaghennie road and Ballakinnag road.



The shallow, extensive flood water provided perfect conditions for breeding, legally protected **common frog** and they had a bumper year with large numbers of froglets seen emerging from the water.

[Morris, N.G. & Sharpe, C.M. \(September 2021\) Birds of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man. British Birds.](#)

Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D. and Win, I. (December 2021) The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds.

Stanbury, A., Burns, F., Aebischer, N., Baker, H., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Dunn, T., Lindley, P., Murphy, M., Noble, N., Owens, R. and Quinn, Q. (September 2024) The status of the UK's breeding seabirds: an addendum to the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds.

[Dubbledam, A. & Bellamy, D. \(2022\) Plants of Conservation Concern Isle of Man 2022. Manx Wildlife Trust](#)

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18th November 2024

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Storm Kathleen (6th April) and spring tides at Rue Point swamping the entire beach washing out early ringed plover nests



April flood water looking east from the Ballakinnag Road at Smeale



April flood water looking west from the Ballaghennie Road