

UPDATE 28th July 2024

Beach All **oystercatcher** chicks have now fledged. Of the 33 oystercatcher nests monitored 25 hatched successfully, 1 clutch was predated, 1 clutch was flooded by high tides and the outcome could not be determined for 6 nests but it is likely they failed. Some **ringed plover** still have chicks on the ground and one or two pairs may still be incubating eggs. Eleven **little tern** chicks have fledged and there may be more chicks still to fledge. **Arctic terns** have abandoned the shingle beach at the Point of Ayre (privately owned); their recently fledged young must have been under threat for them to abandon the site before the chicks could fly strongly. On the 18th July all Arctic terns south of the relay beacon had abandoned the site, approximately ten chicks from this area had fledged but the majority were only flying very short distances. On the same day 18 adult Arctic tern and 5 recently fledged young were recorded north of the relay beacon and these abandoned the Point on the 19th July. On the 23rd July 12 adult Arctic terns and 6 juveniles were at Rue Point. Eight pairs of **common gull** hatched chicks at the Point of Ayre and six pairs raised one or more young.

A flock of 100+ **curlew** are feeding and roosting on the beach on the NNR and further south towards the Lhen. The **eider** duck flock is residing on the NNR and up to 300 eider can be seen. Large flocks of up to 400 **kittiwake** and 100 **sandwich tern** are along the north-west coast. **Sanderling** and **dunlin** have arrived from their breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland and are busily feeding up along the entire coastline before they travel further south for the winter. There are also smaller numbers of **turnstone** and a **knot** was present on the 23rd and 27th July. Two **common tern** were at Rue Point on the 26th July.

Offshore Feeding frenzies have been evident between Ballaghennie and the Point of Ayre with many **gannet** and **Manx shearwater** taking advantage of the bumper food supply. On the 12th and 13th up to 5 **Arctic skuas** were recorded attempting to steal fish from terns.



Dunes and heath All the **curlew** chicks have either fledged or been predated. Some pairs of **stonechat** have just fledged their second or third brood of chicks. There are plenty of young **skylark** around. Small flocks of adult and juvenile **chough** are searching out their invertebrate food in the dune grassland. **Kestrel** are regularly hunting over the heath. A juvenile female **hen harrier** has been seen a few times on the reserve. Neil Morris reported a **marsh harrier** on the reserve on the 27th July.

The **bell heather** is in full flower and the yellow flowers of the **western gorse** are just beginning to show.

Louise Samson CEcol MCIEEM BSc MSc
Ecosystem Policy Team (ecopolicy@gov.im)
Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture
Louise.Samson@gov.im Mobile 365131





Daniel has been undertaking work experience on the NNR. We removed 87 New Zealand Flax seedlings from the dunes. Well done Daniel!

This non-native plant has the potential to be invasive forcing out native plants.



Dune Robberfly *Philonicus albiceps*

The sandy soils found on the NNR warm up quickly and this makes it an important area for invertebrates. The NNR has over 30 nationally scarce invertebrate species and still, sunny days in **August** are great for spotting insects.



The rare **heath bee fly** *Bombylius minor* has been recorded between plantation and the Point of Ayre; this follows several years of very few sightings. Cindy Scale recorded it on the adjacent Manx BirdLife National Reserve on the 8th and 15th July. Steve Crellin recorded it at three locations on the NNR and at the Point of Ayre on the 17th July and Pete Hadfield recorded three at Ballaghennie on the 21st July. There were five on the west side of the plantation on the 27th July. To find out more about these tiny, fascinating creatures see the [Heath Bee fly Biodiversity Action Plan](#). In previous years heath bee flies have been recorded up to 28th August and so there is still potential for more sightings.



The grayling rests with its wings angled towards the sun to absorb the heat

The sheltered borders around the plantation are a great place to spot invertebrates. There are currently good numbers of the coastal butterfly, the **grayling**, **meadow brown** butterflies and **common darters**.



Common darter



A **great diving beetle** measuring 3cm long was found in the carpark next to the MWT Ayres Nature Discovery Centre. It probably mistook the black tarmac for open water. This voracious predator of aquatic invertebrates and tadpoles was probably on the move after its pond dried out or was looking for a mate. It was released at one of the pools on the southern boundary of the reserve.

Currently Flowering on the NNR



Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*



Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*



Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*



Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*



Cushag (Ragwort) *Senecio jacobaea*
and Cinnabar moth caterpillar *Tyria jacobaeae*



Perennial Sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*



Yellow-horned poppy *Glaucium flavum*



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.

Shingle Beach Plants

Plants growing on the shingle beach have to survive storms, sea spray and droughts. They are specially adapted to survive in these harsh conditions. Some have succulent leaves and stems, like a cactus, to store water, others have waxy leaves to prevent water loss. They have an extensive root system to anchor them in place and they all produce huge amounts of seed to ensure they survive in to the following year. They are important for beach nesting birds because they give chicks somewhere to hide from predators and shelter when it rains. Large flocks of linnet feed on the seed during August and September.



Flowers and seed pods of Sea Sandwort *Honckenia peploides*



Prickly Saltwort
Salsola kali



Sea Mayweed
Tripleurospermum maritimum



Frosted Orache
Atriplex laciniata



Sea Rocket
Cakile maritima