

### UPDATE 24th August 2024

All tern fencing was removed on the 5th and 6th August. Eleven **little tern** chicks fledged and an estimated 15 **Arctic tern** chicks fledged. Waders, including **oystercatcher**, **curlew** and **ringed plover** are starting to form flocks. **Sanderling**, **dunlin** and **ringed plover** are still stopping off in good numbers to feed on the beach before carrying on with their migration; small flocks of these species usually reside on the NNR for the winter along with low numbers of **turnstone**. **Golden plover** will start to return to the Ayres from their breeding grounds, flocks of up to 400 have been recorded over the winter. Divers will also be returning and will spend the winter diving for fish just offshore; **red-throated divers** are most commonly seen and occasionally **black-throated divers** and **great northern divers**. Large flocks of **linnet** are feeding on the seed produced by the sea sandwort and these usually attract the attention of passage and wintering **merlin**.



The first flowering **field gentians** were recorded on the NNR this week. If the weather is favourable, these plants will flower for at least another month. The Ayres is the only place on the Isle of Man where this rare plant occurs and it particularly likes growing on the paths.



2024 has been a bumper year for the rare **heath bee fly** with good numbers recorded from the Point of Ayre to MWT Cronk y Bing ASSI at the Lhen.



Some of the commoner and widespread fungi are starting to fruit on the NNR including **blackening waxcap**, **star pinkgill** (so called because of irregular, star shaped spores) and **blue-edged pinkgill**.

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



# Ayres NNR Plantation



The Ayres NNR plantation covers 1 hectare and is included in the Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR) designations. The small woodland was planted in 1967 before the nature conservation value of the Ayres was fully recognised. The majority of trees planted are **Scots pine** at the southern end and **lodgepole pine** in the northern section; there are also a few large **Monterey pines** and these are the ones that produce very large pine cones.

Now that the plantation is well established, it provides nesting habitat for **chaffinch**, **goldcrest**, **wood pigeon**, **raven** and **mistle thrush** and occasionally **kestrel**, **sparrowhawk** and **long-eared owl**. Ravens nest in the same place year after year and the massive stick nest is very obvious. Mistle thrush make beautiful nests in the forks of trees out of lichens and grasses. **Crossbill** occasionally visit the plantation and feed on pine cone seeds; these colourful birds are a treat to watch, their 'glip, glip' call is a clue to their presence.



**Spring beauty**, as its name suggests, flowers in spring and grows extensively in the plantation. More recently the plantation has become colonised by **Tramman trees** (elder) from seed brought in by pigeons and expelled in their poo. Other woodland plants that have become established are **ivy**, **red campion**, **honeysuckle**, **male fern** and **broad buckler fern**.



**Slippery jack**, **plums** and **custard**, **dyer's mazingill** and **primrose brittlegill** are all types of fungi found growing in, or around the edge of the plantation.

The sheltered edges of the plantation are excellent places to spot invertebrates. There are still good numbers of **grayling**, **meadow brown** and **common darter** taking advantage of the favourable micro-climate created by the plantation.