Eanlee Ta Jannoo Idd Er Y Traie
Beach Nesting Birds

Cummey Yannoo Beiyn-Feie
Biodiversity Action Plan

Little tern

Gant Beg *Sternula albifrons*

Arctic tern

Gant Ny Gibbinyn *Sterna paradisaea*

Oystercatcher

Garee Breck or Bridjeen *Haematopus ostralegus*

Ringed plover

Feddag Ainnit *Charadrius hiaticula*

Common gull

Foillan Cadjin *Larus canus*

All photos taken under licence

Status

This BAP covers the five species nesting on our shingle beaches:

Common Name	Scientific Name	BOCC IOM Status[1]		BOCC 5 UK[2,3] Status		Schedule 1 WA 1990
Little tern	*Sternula albifrons*	Red	BDr1	Amber	BDMp1, BDMr2, BL	Yes
Arctic tern	*Sterna paradisaea*	Red	HD	Red	BDp1, BDMp2, BDMr2	Yes
Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	Red	SPEC 1	Amber	ERLOB, WL, WI, BI	No
Ringed plover	*Charadrius hiaticula*	Amber	BI/WI	Red	WDp1; BDMp1, WDMp2, WI	Yes
Common gull	*Larus canus*	Amber	BDr1, BL	Red	BDp1, WI	No

HD Historical breeding decline	**BDp1/2** severe breeding population decline over 25 years/longer term
BDr1 Red ≥50% decline 1999 to 2017-18	**BDMp1/2** moderate breeding population decline over 25 years/longer term
SPEC 1 European Conservation Status Red BirdLife International (2017)	**BDMr1/2** moderate breeding range decline over 25 years/longer term
BI/WI Breeding/Wintering importance within UK & IoM	**BL/WL** breeding/non-breeding localisation
BL Localised breeding population	**ERLOB** threatened in Europe
	BI/WI breeding/non-breeding international importance
	WDMp1/2 moderate non-breeding population decline over 25 years/longer term

BOCC IoM and BOCC 5 confirm that all five species are experiencing worrying population declines. The five species are combined in to one BAP because they utilise the same habitat in the breeding season and the challenges they face are similar.

SPECIES PROFILES

Little tern

Little tern are our smallest tern, they have a yellow bill with a black tip, yellow legs and a distinctive white forehead. They arrive from 21st April onwards and start to nest from early May onwards. They lay one to three eggs and will lay a second clutch if the first fails. The female incubates the eggs for 21 days and the chicks fledge at around 21 days. They feed on sand eels and young herring.

Little tern are one of the rarest breeding sea birds in the UK with only 2,000 pairs nesting. They were first recorded breeding on the Isle of Man in 1898[4]. Colour ringing has shown that the Manx colony has close links with the Gronant colony on the north coast of Wales and this likely explains the fluctuation in breeding pairs from year to year with little terns switching between colonies depending on suitability of conditions (predators, disturbance, beach profile, prey availability). Little tern require a productivity 0.75 to maintain the population density. The average productivity for Manx little terns over the past 27 years is 0.45 and the colony is being sustained by recruitment from other little tern colonies around the Irish sea.

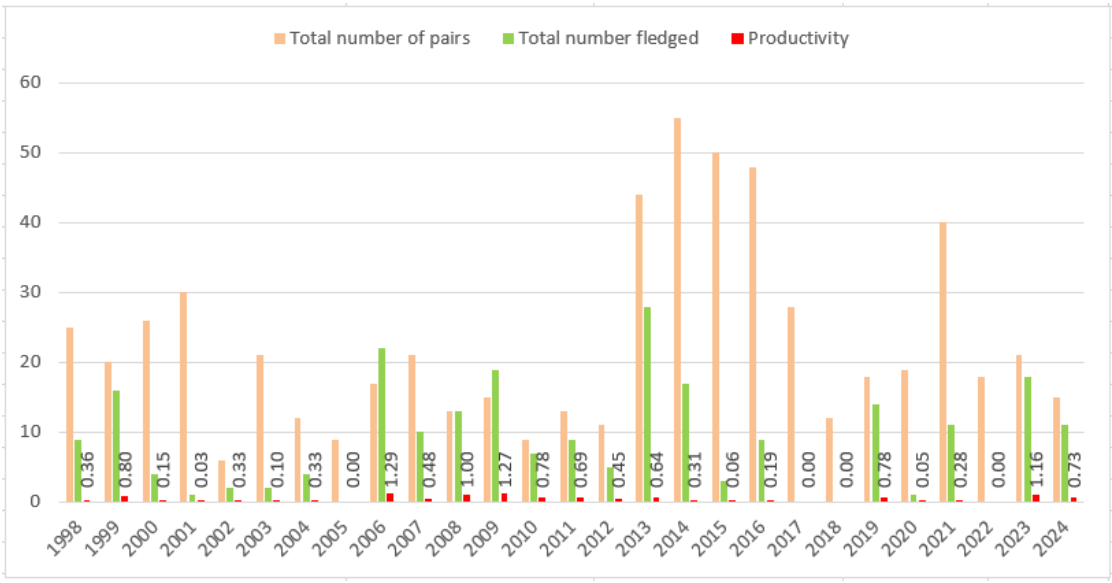
The main threats include predation of adults and chicks by sparrowhawk; predation of eggs by hedgehogs, corvids and gulls and prey availability.

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

[2] Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., MCulloch, 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.

[3] 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.

[4] Ralfe, P.G. (1905). The Birds of the Isle of Man. D. Douglas, Edinburgh.



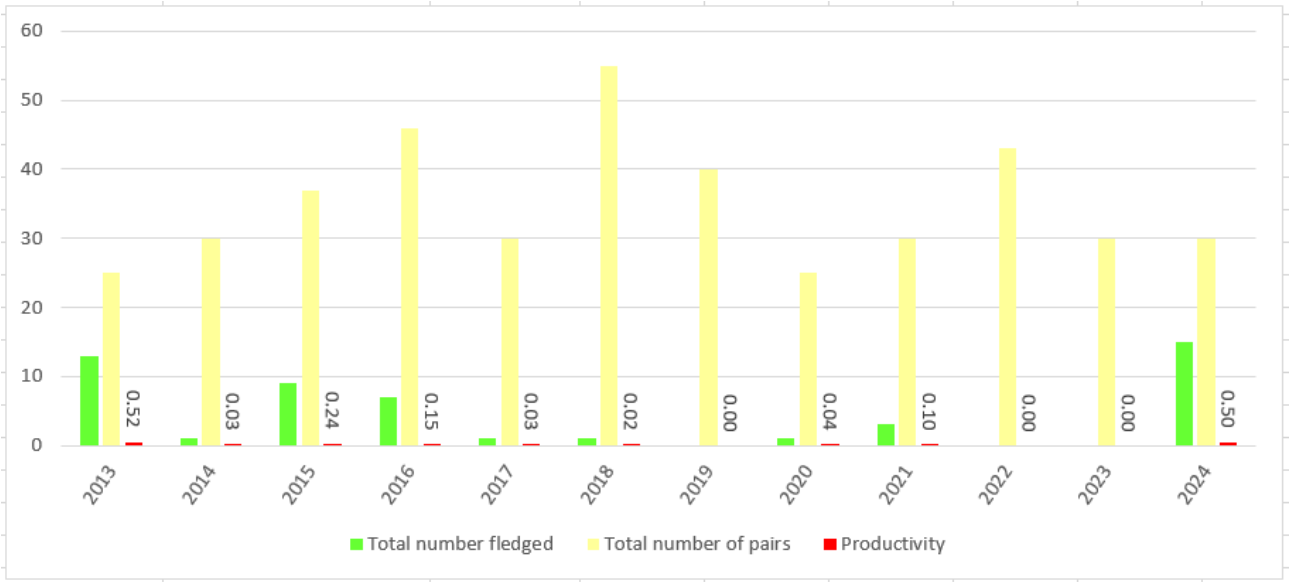
Little tern breeding pairs, fledglings and productivity 1998 to 2024

Arctic tern

Arctic tern have short red legs, a red bill, black cap and a swallow-like tail. They arrive mid-May and start to nest almost immediately laying one to three eggs. A second clutch is laid if the first fails. The female incubates the eggs for 21 days and the chicks fledge around 21 days. They feed on sand eels and young herring. Arctic terns can be long lived, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) reports the maximum age from ringing records as 31 years, with a typical life span of 13 years.

The average productivity over the past 12 years for the Manx population is 0.14 and this is clearly a species in serious trouble on the Isle of Man only sustained by recruitment from other colonies. Colour ringing has shown that the same birds are attempting to nest year after year and chicks colour ringed at the Point of Ayre are returning to breed. This colony is very popular with the public who enjoy watching these charismatic, beautiful birds.

The main threats include predation of eggs by brown rats, human disturbance and prey availability.



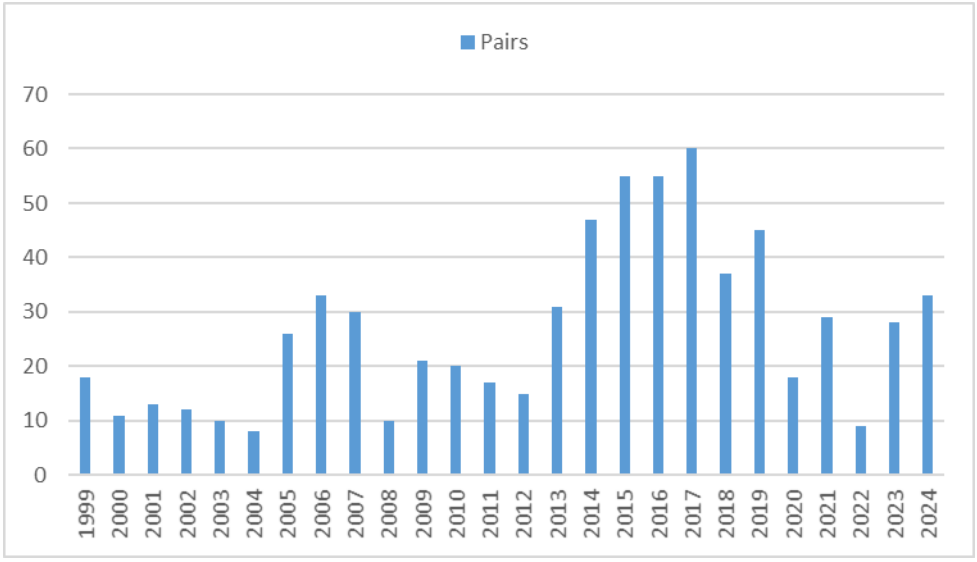
Arctic tern breeding pairs, fledglings and productivity 2013 to 2024

Oystercatcher

Oystercatcher are a large wader with distinctive long red bill, red legs and red iris. They only lay one clutch of eggs per year from April to late May containing one to four eggs. Eggs are incubated for 24 days and chicks fledge at around 34 days old. They feed on a wide range of invertebrates and adults feed chicks initially.

The graph shows the number of pairs recorded breeding on the north-west coast only and is only a guide as monitoring effort has not been consistent across all years. 2013 to 2018 shows consistent monitoring of nests from Blue Point to the Point of Ayre. There is no constant data available for pairs nesting across the Isle of Man. Sharpe *et al*. (2007)[5] estimated the breeding population for the Isle of Man to be 337 to 372 pairs for the period 1998 to 2002 (including pairs breeding inland). Egg predation for oystercatchers has always been low on the north-west coast however, in 2018 and 2019 egg predation increased to 40%. In the past couple of years, egg predation on the north-west coast has returned to low levels. There is insufficient resources to monitor chick survival but an estimated one third of pairs successfully raise a single chick. The BTO reports the maximum age from ringing records as 41 years with the average lifespan of 12 years.

The main threats are predation of chicks by corvids and gulls.



Number of breeding pairs of oystercatcher on the north-west coast from 1999 to 2024

Ringed plover

The ringed plover is a small brown and white wader with a black band around the neck. They have a short orange bill with a black tip and orange legs. Females lay three to four eggs from April to August and can lay up to three clutches if early clutches fail. Females incubate the eggs for 23 days and chicks fledge at around 23 days. Chicks self-feed on invertebrates and are closely watched and guarded by both parents; young chicks regularly return to the female and sit under her to keep warm and safe.

[5] Sharpe, C.M., Bishop, J.P., Cullen, J.P., Govannini, P.G., Thorpe, J.P. & Weaver, P. (2007) Manx Bird Atlas – An Atlas on breeding and wintering birds on the Isle of Man April 1998 to March 2003. Liverpool University Press.

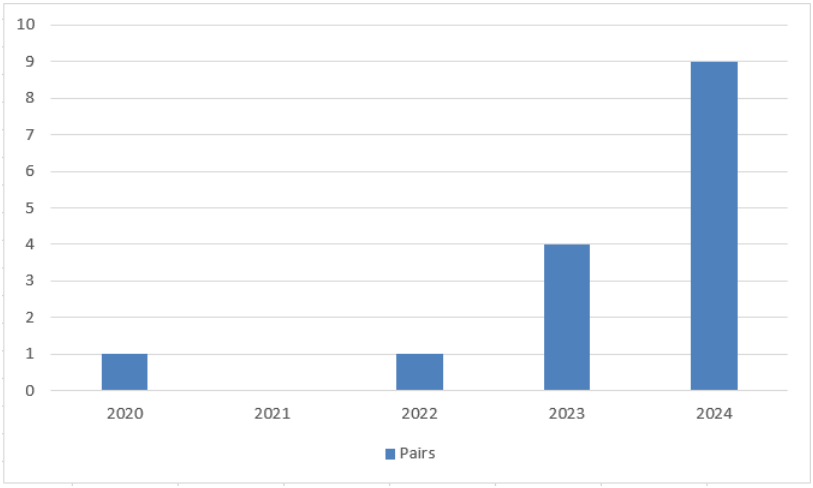
Attaining an accurate figure of breeding pairs of ringed plover is challenging because they lay up to three clutches per breeding season. In 2016, 75 nests were monitored on the north-west coast over the entire breeding season but this only equated to 20 active nests (20 breeding pairs) at any one time. Sharpe et al. (2007) estimated the breeding population for the Isle of Man to be 89 to 95 pairs for the period 1998 to 2002. In recent years, less than 10 recently fledged young have been observed on the north-west coast per breeding season.

The main threats are predation of eggs and chicks by hedgehogs, corvids and gulls.

Common gull

Despite their name, common gulls are one of our rarest breeding birds on the Isle of Man. They are smaller and daintier than their more widespread cousins, the herring gull. They have a yellow beak and yellow-green legs. Common gull lay up to three eggs and if the first clutch fails, they will lay a second clutch. The chicks are fed invertebrates that the adults collect in their crop and then regurgitate for the chicks to feed on. They collect invertebrates from the strandline and also from farmland, particularly recently ploughed fields. The wintering population swells with birds from off Island and flocks of up to 400 recorded roosting on the north-west coast.

Common gull have bred in very low numbers on the Isle of Man since 1990. Sharpe *et al*. (2007)[6] reported six to ten pairs breeding around the gravel pits and restored landfill for the period 1998 to 2002. The graph shows the number of breeding pairs nesting on the shingle beach at the Point of Ayre only and this was first seen in 2020. In 2024, nine pairs were recorded nesting on the beach and at least nine chicks fledged (pairs continue to nest on the gravel pits and in the Manx Bird Life National Reserve). Colour ringing has demonstrated that the same birds are returning year after year to breed. Breeding pairs do appear to be gradually increasing in the vicinity of the Point of Ayre.



Number of breeding pairs of common gull on the beach at the Point of Ayre from 2020 to 2024

The main threats are predation of eggs by hedgehogs, corvids and gulls and prey availability.

[6] Sharpe, C.M., Bishop, J.P., Cullen, J.P., Govannini, P.G., Thorpe, J.P. & Weaver, P. (2007) Manx Bird Atlas – An Atlas on breeding and wintering birds on the Isle of Man April 1998 to March 2003. Liverpool University Press.

Manx Distribution

Current main locations of beach nesting birds

Legal protection

- Little tern, Arctic tern and ringed plover are listed on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, under which signatories are encouraged to draw up agreements to restore/maintain species' conservation status through management and other appropriate measures.
- All five species are listed on the Afro-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement.
- Birds, their nests, eggs and dependant young are legally protected under the Wildlife Act 1990. In addition, species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act are protected from disturbance while nesting and while they have dependant young.
- Ayres NNR Byelaws 2005 protects all birds from disturbance at all times.

Threats

- Predation of eggs by corvids, gulls, hedgehogs and rats
- Predation of chicks by corvids, gulls, sparrowhawk, kestrel, hedgehogs, rats and cats
- Predation of adult little tern by sparrowhawk
- Prolonged or repeated disturbance by man (photography, walkers, sightseers, beach cleaning etc.)
- Dogs disturbing nesting birds and eating eggs and chicks
- Trampling of eggs and chicks by man and horses
- Vehicles on beaches
- Plastic ingestion
- Intermittent prey availability
- Recreation
- Climate change- sea level rise leading to more frequent nest flooding
- Climate change – extreme weather events with more frequent storms changing the beach profile, narrowing the beach above the high tide mark and restricting available nesting areas
- Climate change – more frequent summer storms creating sea conditions where adults are unable to catch fish
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Reason for BAP

Low productivity making populations unsustainable.

Additional BAPs are required to address disturbance of roosting and feeding wintering waders as either a collective BAP or individual BAPs for each species.

Aims

- Maintain current population and range
- Increase productivity
- Expand current range
- Gain a better understanding of breeding success for ringed plover and oystercatcher to enable conservation measures to be put in place

Resources

https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-we-do/protecting-species-and-habitats/projects/life-on-the-edge

https://littleternproject.org.uk/about-the-project/

Linked BAPS

Habitats

- Shingle beach

Delivery Options	Active	Challenges
○ Monitor pairs and fledging success to better determine productivity and understand conservation requirements	Partially – NNR only	Resources
○ Monitor range to determine any further retraction	No	Resources
○ Monitor food availability	No	Resources
○ Add oystercatcher and common gull to Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act 1990	No	Resources Requires political agreement
○ Improved detection of Wildlife Crime to ensure infringement of the Wildlife Act is dealt with appropriately	No	Resources
○ Byelaws for the intertidal	Initiated	Resources
○ Predator management programme – exclusion fences	No	Resources Landowner agreement
○ Predator management programme – discourage predators	No	Resources
○ Predator management programme – removal	Partially	Resources
○ Enhanced wardening schemes	No	Resources
○ Zonation of areas to prevent disturbance from people and dogs	Partially – NNR. Trialled at Langness in 2024	Resources
○ Include Cronk y Bing ASSI within the Ayres NNR	Initiated	Resources Requires political and landowner agreement
○ Designate Rue Point to Cronk y Bing an ASSI/NNR and Point of Ayre an ASSI/NNR	No	Resources Requires political and landowner agreement
○ Ramsar designation of beach nesting bird locations	No	Resources
○ Designate Langness, Derbyhaven and Sandwick ASSI an NNR	No	Resources Requires political and landowner agreement
○ Fencing and signage at Langness raising public awareness of beach nesting birds	Successful trial led by MBL in 2024 to be continued in 2025	Resources
○ Gate vehicle access points to beach at Cronk y Bing and Blue Point	No	Requires agreement from Harbours and Coast Guard
○ Work with local farmers through the Agri-Environment Scheme to enhance invertebrate food source for common gull and oystercatcher	No	Land owner willingness
○ Education	Yes	Resources
○ BAP's to address wintering wader requirements	No	Resources
○ Nest monitoring training	Partially	Resources
○ Adhere to current guidance for HPAI	Yes	
○ Liaise with UK Steering Group for beach nesting birds	Yes	
○ Annual review and update of this document	By 1/4/25	