



Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Islands

Ramsar Site

Annual Action Programme

2017

Reported by: Abbie Ferrar, Dr Mel Broadhurst

Reviewed by: Roland Gauvain, Lindsay Pyne and Charles Michel

Alderney Wildlife Trust
48 Victoria Street
Alderney, GY9 3TA
Channel Islands

ramsar@alderneywildlife.org
www.alderneywildlife.org

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background.....	3
3. Objectives.....	4
4. Work Programme.....	6
4.1 Seabirds.....	6
4.1.1 Monitoring.....	6
4.1.2 Cameras.....	6
4.1.4 Ringing.....	6
4.1.5 Seabird Population Monitoring.....	7
4.1.7 Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).....	7
4.2 Terrestrial.....	7
4.2.1 Small Mammal Trapping.....	7
4.2.2 Footpath Construction.....	7
4.2.3 Habitat Management.....	7
4.3 Marine.....	7
4.3.1 Desk Based Review.....	7
4.3.2 Habitat Mapping.....	7
4.3.3 Phase II monitoring species survey.....	8
4.3.4 Strandline Survey.....	8
4.3.5 Intertidal species Survey.....	8
4.3.6 Marine Mammal	8
4.3.8 Citizen Science.....	8
4.3.9 Eelgrass Surveys.....	8
4.3.10 Water Quality Testing	8
4.3.11 Marine Management Activities.....	9
4.3.12 University of York MSc Projects	9
4.4 Events.....	9
4.4.1 Boat Tours.....	9
4.4.2 LIVE: Teaching Through Nature.....	9
4.4.3 T.A.G (Track A Gannet).....	9
4.5 Legislation.....	9
4.5.1 Closed Season Signage.....	10
4.5.2 Channel Islands Ramsar Group.....	10
5. Bibliography.....	10

1. Introduction

In 2017 the Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site goes into the first year of its third five-year Management Strategy.

This document outlines the planned works for 2017.



Figure 1. Shows the Ramsar site boundary in relation to Alderney and all other surrounding islets.

2. Background

On 25th August 2005 the Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site was designated and gained global recognition as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The site covers 1,500 hectares of land and sea and was the first Ramsar designated site in the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

In 2006 on behalf of the States of Alderney (SoA), the General Services Committee (GSC) requested the support of the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) in the preparation of a management strategy. This is required under the commitments of the Ramsar Convention. The completed Ramsar site strategy outlines the need to monitor seabird population trends (including population and distribution assessments) and to continue the management of these populations where necessary.

The objectives of the strategy are assessed annually through various research projects and conservation management techniques. The Ramsar Site Five-Year Management Strategy and annual Action Plan are prepared by the AWT on behalf of the SoA.

3. Objectives

To meet with the objectives of the new 2017- 2021 Ramsar Site Management Strategy, the following areas of work are to be completed in 2017.

Please note that by approving this Action Plan the SoA is agreeing to all the proposed work therein. Similarly the AWT commits to the delivery of the work described (accepting the availability of resources necessary and favourable weather conditions) and accepts the Committee's requirement to inform the appointed SoA representative if any aspect of the work requires significant alteration from the parameters contained within the Action Plan, or if any new element of work not described in the Action Plan is found to be required, prior to their altering the details of the Action Plan.

Seabirds:

- Continuation of all seabird monitoring on Burhou, Alderney and other islets.
- Re-installation of Puffin Cam on Burhou to coincide with the LIVE: Teaching Through Nature programme.
- Continuation of Storm-Petrel ringing with the Alderney Bird Observatory.
- Continuation of Gull ringing on Burhou, inclusive of Herring, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.
- Continuation of Gannet ringing on Ortac and Les Etacs, focussing on immature birds.
- Signpost and exclusion zone placement for public awareness of nesting Ringed Plovers at Platte Saline, Clonque and Saye, with regular monitoring of the three sites.
- Population count of all seabirds on Coque Lihou.
- Review the possibilities of non-human methods of monitoring Burhou's surrounding islets
- Monthly WeBS figures submitted to the BTO and to the AWT Ramsar databases.
- Population data for all seabirds to be added to the annual data sheet.

Terrestrial:

- Small mammal trapping on Burhou and Houmet de Pies using Longworth traps and chew sticks to understand what, if anything is present
- Monitoring and managing of the invasive Hottentot-fig and bracken will continue on Burhou.
- Path network to be created and subsequently maintained allowing access from landing points to hut and main fishing locations to prevent disturbance.

Marine:

- Desk-based review of all intertidal survey methods, results and activity within the Ramsar Site.
- Intertidal habitat mapping of Hanaine Bay.
- Phase 2 species monitoring survey of Burhou using Fixed Quadrat Photography.
- Intertidal standline surveys of Platte Saline, Clonque and Hannaine Bays of dead, live and litter content.
- Green ormer population assessment at Clonque Bay.
- Citizen science project, Capturing our Coast, at Clonque Bay to promote marine life within the Ramsar site.
- Eelgrass survey at selected sites within the Ramsar Site using snorkel and video techniques.
- Liaise with and support regional Seasearch groups to conduct potential marine ecological surveys.
- Sampling of key seawater parameters at Platte Saline, Clonque and Hannaine Bays.
- Review all marine mammals survey methods, results and activities within the Ramsar site.
- Continuation of marine mammal species surveys and general recordings of.
- Support the local British Marine Life rescue Divers on Alderney.
- Support the community led Marine Management group and management plan.
- Support two potential MSc academic research projects:
 1. Investigating the ecology of macrofauna within Alderney's intertidal sediments.
 2. Investigating the ecology of kelp habitats on Alderney.

Events:

- Continuation of boat tours on Sula of Braye to increase public awareness of the Ramsar site while contributing to costs.
- Continuation of LIVE: Teaching Through Nature programme and Track-A-Gannet (TAG).
- Continuation of other annual events, such as rock-pooling and walks within the Ramsar Site.

Legislation:

- Signpost placement for public awareness of nesting Common Terns at Bibette Head.
- Signpost placement alerting the public to the closed season on Burhou, at four main landing

points on Burhou.

- Organise and establish the first Channel Islands Steering Group meeting to ensure standardisation and thus comparable data between Islands.

4. Work Programme

4.1 Seabirds

4.1.1 Monitoring

All seabirds across the West Coast of Alderney and the surrounding islands (Burhou, Coque Lihou, Ortac and Les Etacs) will continue to be monitored across the breeding season in accordance with the JNCC Seabird Monitoring Handbook. All data should be added to the AWT seabird data sheet at the end of the season.

4.1.2 Cameras

The re-installation of Puffin Cam on Burhou will go ahead as in previous years. As well as providing up-to-date images for the general public, the footage will also be used as part of an on-going educational programme, LIVE: Teaching Through Nature, which is aimed at Primary school children both in the Channel Islands and UK.

4.1.3 Ringing

With the success of the Alderney Bird Observatory (ABO), the existing ringing effort will continue in 2017 along with the support from the Channel Islands Bird Ringing Scheme (CIBRS).

This work will include ringing Gull species present on Burhou (Lesser black-backed, great black-backed and herring gulls) in June and July. The methodology that has been used in previous years and in the 2017 – 2021 Management Strategy will be used.

A team of 6 people will visit Burhou in June for 1 day to ring Lesser Black-Backed Gulls (LBBG). A team of 9 people will visit Burhou in July for 2 overnight stays to ring Great Black-Backed Gulls (GBBG) to reduce disturbance this will also be the Storm Petrel ringing weekend.

Due to the small size of the chicks at the end of April a team of 6 will visit Little Burhou to ring the cormorants to reduce the disturbance on the colony. Ringing of the Les Etacs and Ortac Gannets will continue in June or July.

A standardised methodology for colour ringing puffins is currently being discussed, it will be added into the 5 year management strategy once finalised.

4.1.4 Public Awareness Signs

To continue the increased public awareness of the breeding location of Ringed Plovers, signs will be placed at the main entrances to beaches at Platte Saline, Clonque and Saye.

Signs will also be placed around Bibette Head to increase the public awareness of the Common Terns breeding at Houmet des Pies.

With planning permission secured for signs at Burhou, at the start of the closed season, signs will be erected at the four main landing points on Burhou, alerting the public to the closed season.

4.1.5 Seabird Population Monitoring

All Alderney's seabird populations (excepting the Atlantic puffin, which should be monitored annually) shall be monitored on a five year rotation to make best use of available resources while maintaining datasets.

A population count of Conque Lihou shall be completed.

4.1.6 Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Monthly wetland birds surveys at Clonque Bay, Braye Bay, Longis Bay and Longis Pond by local volunteers. Volunteers are provided with data sheets. Results should be submitted to the BTO and AWT database. Promotion of these surveys will help us and the BTO get a better understand of the number and distribution of wetland birds. It can also help identify important sites for wetland birds. If more volunteers come forward more locations can be added to the WeBS database.

4.2 Terrestrial

4.2.1 Small Mammal Monitoring

Small Mammal monitoring will be carried out at the end of the breeding season on Burhou to minimise possible impacts on Alderney's seabird populations. There will be a night of pre-bait traps followed by two nights of trapping (i.e. set the traps Friday pm. Open Saturday am and leave open until Monday pm).

Small Mammal monitoring will be carried out on Houmet de Pies using long worth traps. It is hoped this will give us a greater understanding of the Common Tern colony.

4.2.2 Footpath Construction

It is hoped that planning permission will be secured to start the process of footpath construction on Burhou to minimise disturbance to seabird colonies. Storm-Petrel's are late breeders and may nest in the shingle beaches.

Footpath construction will be done in the winter to prevent disturbance with erection of signs encouraging people to use the footpaths.

4.2.3 Habitat Management

A pre and post season check on bracken and Hottentot-fig will be carried out. Any bracken found in the walls of the hut or nearing the puffin colony will be cleared and all Hottentot-fig will be removed from the island.

4.3 Marine

4.3.1 Desk-based reviews

A review on intertidal and marine mammal survey methods, results and activities within the Ramsar Site.

4.3.2 Habitat mapping survey

Marine intertidal resource habitat mapping using aerial photographs will be undertaken at Hanaine Bay. The survey follows guidance from the JNCC Procedural Guideline 1-1.

4.3.3 Phase II monitoring species survey

Phase II littoral monitoring species survey will be conducted on Burhou using fixed quadrat photography. The survey follows guidance from the JNCC.

4.3.4 Strandline survey

Marine intertidal strandline surveys will be conducted across Platte Saline, Clonque Bay and Hanaine Bay. The Strandlines will be assessing presence, size and composition of dead, live and litter content.

4.3.5 Intertidal Species Survey

Marine intertidal species surveys will be conducted within Clonque Bay. The surveys will assess locally important species (i.e. Green Ormer, *Haliotis tuberculata*) and invasive species (i.e. Japweed, *Sargassum muticum*). This survey follows guidance from the Marine Biological Association and will include collaboration with other Channel Island organisations, including La Société Guernesiaise.

4.3.6 Marine Mammals

A number of marine mammal species surveys will be conducted across the Ramsar Site. Surveys will include grey seal population dynamics assessment, grey seal photographic ID catalogue and effort based land/boat surveys. These surveys follow guidance from the Sea Watch Foundation and the Cornwall Seal Group and have been used throughout Alderney to record marine mammal species both quantitatively and qualitatively with the public (through observational spotting events and promotion of marine mammal species recording forms).

4.3.8 Citizen Science

Capturing our Coast (CoCoast) training courses will be provide by the AWT to members of the public. Training session will take place on Clonque Bay. This project includes general quantitative information of intertidal species and invasive species.

Regional Seasearch groups will conduct scuba diving ecological surveys within the Ramsar site. The sites have been recommended within the Benthic Desk-based review.

4.3.9 Eelgrass Surveys

Video habitat and species presence assessment of eelgrass will take place at selected sites within the Ramsar Site. Sites will be chosen based on the substrate type. This survey will use snorkel and drop-down camera video techniques, following guidance from the JNCC. The survey method has been

used to identify eelgrass within other locations across Alderney including Braye Beach Bay and Longis Bay.

4.3.10 Water Quality testing

Monthly sampling at Platte Saline, Clonque and Hannaine bay of key seawater parameters during March to October. Parameters will be confirmed with funding availability.

4.3.11 Marine Management activities

Online and street surveys that are aimed at residents and visitors to help gain an understanding of the public opinion of the Ramsar site. We want the Ramsar site to be seen as the valuable resource that it is, rather than as an area managed solely for the benefit of the wildlife. This will be an extension to the works done by the Marine Management forum.

4.3.12 University of York MSc Projects

1. Investigating the ecology of macrofauna within Alderney's intertidal sediments.
Assessment: The project will entail investigating the ecology of macrofauna of Alderney's intertidal sediments. This will include researching several key intertidal beaches across Alderney and assessing macro fauna (500 m – 5cm) presence, abundance, biological diversity and composition, using field-based methods. Surveys will be completed across different intertidal beach environments (including bays within the island's Ramsar Site, harbour and recreational areas). This project is important, as there is currently extremely limited ecological information of macrofauna on Alderney. In addition, a number of the selected bays for study occur within island's Ramsar Site, whilst others are selected for future, potential coastal development (such as marina development and sub-sea electrical cable deployment).
2. Investigating the ecology of kelp habitats on Alderney.
Assessment: The project will entail investigating the ecology of kelp habitats on Alderney. This will first include assessing the presence, classification and distribution of kelp habitats around Alderney. The project will then quantify the ecology within selected kelp habitats, in terms of associated macroalgae and faunal species' presence, abundance, biological diversity and composition. This project is important, due to kelp habitats acknowledged as key marine habitats within the Channel Islands in terms of conservation importance and protection.

4.4 Events

4.4.1 Boat Tours

The AWT boat, Sula of Braye, will continue to be used to transport staff (to Burhou, Les Etacs and Ortac) and for public boat tours to increase public awareness of the Ramsar Site, while also contributing to the costs of the seabird and marine mammal monitoring effort. This is in addition to other privately operated charter boats such as Lady Maris.

4.4.2 LIVE: Teaching Through Nature

Our Live: Teaching Through Nature programme will run from 24th April and will incorporate many aspects of Alderney's history and wildlife. The programme will use the cameras on Burhou to give the children an idea of seabird behaviour in breeding colonies, specifically Puffins on Burhou. The project will also help children understand how we monitor the birds. The live camera feed and more

information on the project will be available at www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk through the season.

4.4.3 T.A.G (Track A Gannet)

The Gannet tagging project will continue this year, pending sufficient sponsorship, tracking the foraging movements of Ortac birds. Preliminary dates for the TAG on Ortac is 14/15 July.

4.5 Legislation

4.5.1 Closed Season Signage

Closed season signage, which has over time fallen out of use, is to be installed through liaison with the SoA at the main landing points on Burhou in the winter of 2016/17. The AWT will work with the States Works Department (SWD) to permanently install signs stating that no one may land on Burhou between 15th March and 31st July and that anyone landing during the open season must make themselves aware of the States Code of Conduct.

4.5.2 Channel Islands Ramsar Group

To organise a meeting with the other islands Ramsar Steering Groups at the Inter-Island Environmental Meeting in the Autumn to discuss the development of a Channel Islands Ramsar Group. This will be an opportunity for the other islands to share their thoughts and ideas.

5 Bibliography

Wieckowski, F. & Ferrar, A. (2017) *Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site Management Strategy 2017-2021*. In House Publication.

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