

2025 Roundup

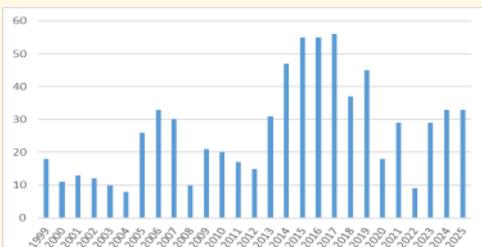


Curlew are **red** listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BOCC) because of a rapid decline in the breeding population over a short space of time. From 1999 to 2012 less than ten pairs nested on the NNR. Currently the number of breeding pairs are increasing year on year with an impressive 26 pairs attempting to breed in 2025; of these 14 definitely fledged at least one young and it's likely an additional two pairs also fledged young. Failures occur at the chick stage, not the egg stage, and possible causes are predation by hen harriers, buzzards, gulls, crows and cats. The increased density of breeding curlew on the NNR assists other birds like little terns to raise young successfully as the larger curlews drive off avian predators over a wide area. The British Trust for Ornithology reports the typical life expectancy of curlew as 11 years with breeding starting at age 2 and it is likely that successful breeding over the past few years has contributed to the recruitment of new pairs on the NNR. Little is known about the wintering habits of Manx breeding curlew and specific colour ringing projects could improve our understanding.

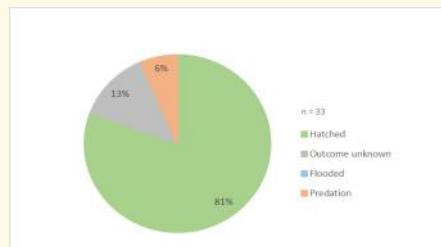
Pair Outcome

Chick Outcome per Pair	2023		2024		2025	
	Ballaghennie	Rue Point	Ballaghennie	Rue Point	Ballaghennie	Rue Point
1+ fledged	5	1	7	3	7	7
1+ likely fledged		1		1		2
Outcome unknown			3	1	1	1
Chicks failed	5	1	1	2	7	1
Failed to pair		1				
TOTAL	10	4	11	7	15	11
	14		18		26	

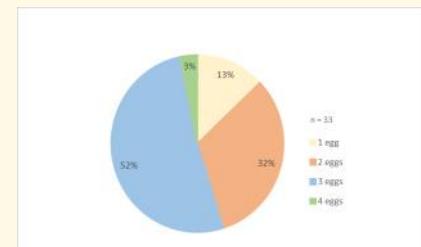
Oystercatcher are **red** listed on BOCC1oM and **amber** listed on BOCC5. In 2025 thirty-three breeding pairs were recorded in total between Rue Point and the Point of Ayre. An estimated third of these went on to fledge at least one young. Egg predation was low in 2025 with the majority of eggs getting to hatching stage. Clutch size was down in 2025 compared to a peak of 82% of nests having 3 eggs in 2023, suggesting that prey availability in the run up to egg laying was suboptimal. There was insufficient time to monitor the number of chicks fledging per pair, but an estimated third of hatched chicks fledged. The number of breeding pairs on the north-west coast is currently stable.



Oystercatcher nests monitored 1999 to 2025. Counts are not fully comparable from year to year as 2015 to 2017 includes nests from Rue Point to Blue Point and nest recording effort has not been equal across years.



Outcome of Oystercatcher nests
See the [Beach Nesting Bird Biodiversity Action Plan \(BAP\)](#) for additional information.



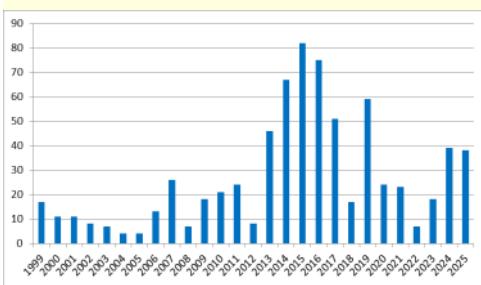
Clutch size of oystercatcher nests monitored. In 2023, a peak of 82% of clutches had 3 eggs.



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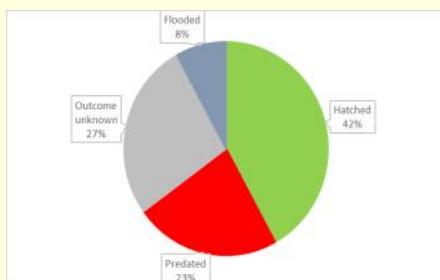
Ringed plover are **amber** listed on BOCCloM and **red** listed on BOCC5. In 2025 26 nests were monitored and an additional 12 breeding territories were identified. As ringed plovers lay up to three clutches of eggs per year if early clutches fail, it is impossible to determine the exact number of breeding pairs without colour ringing individuals. Fourteen ringed plover nests were monitored at the Point of Ayre and many of these are likely to be relays. Nests were so evenly spaced at the Point that they appeared to be on a grid with a minimum of 50m between each breeding pair.



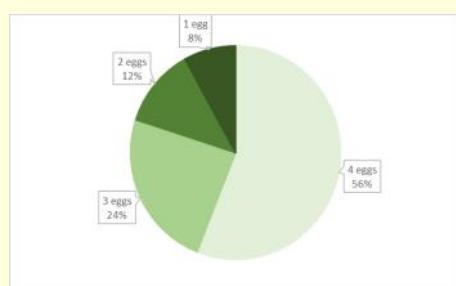
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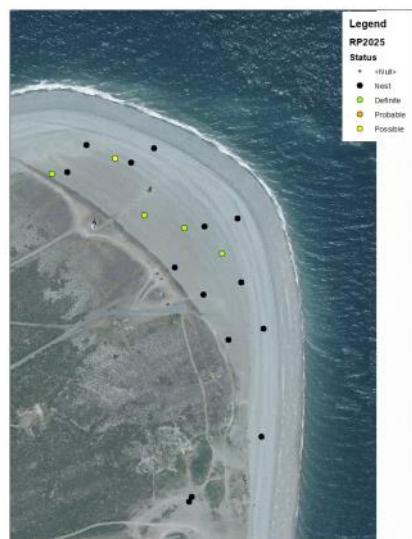
The chicks of beach nesting birds move across the entire beach and will look for their invertebrate prey by the sea.



Outcome of ringed plover nests monitored in 2025



Clutch size of ringed plover nests monitored in 2025



Ringed plover nests at the Point of Ayre



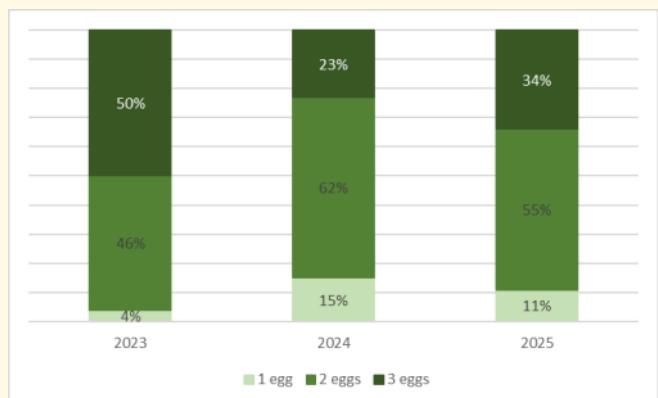
The first **little terns** for the season were recorded at Rue Point, Ayres NNR on the 18th April and the peak adult flock count was recorded on the 13th May when 40 were recorded at the Point of Ayre. The first clutches were seen on the 22nd May and on the 16th June a peak count of 26 active nests were recorded. Thirty-eight nests were monitored with the following outcome 58% hatched, 5% predicated, 10% abandoned, 21% outcome unknown, 3% likely hatched and adult predicated 3%. The first chicks were recorded on the 23rd June. Little terns split in to three discrete colonies and unusually egg predation was incredibly low with only two clutches showing evidence of predation. The wings of three adults were found and these were most likely predicated by a sparrowhawk nesting close by; one adult had been killed very close to the nest. Four nests were abandoned and this is likely to have been due to raptor activity. A deterioration in the weather in early July meant nest monitoring could not be undertaken and this appears to have coincided with both egg and chick failure.

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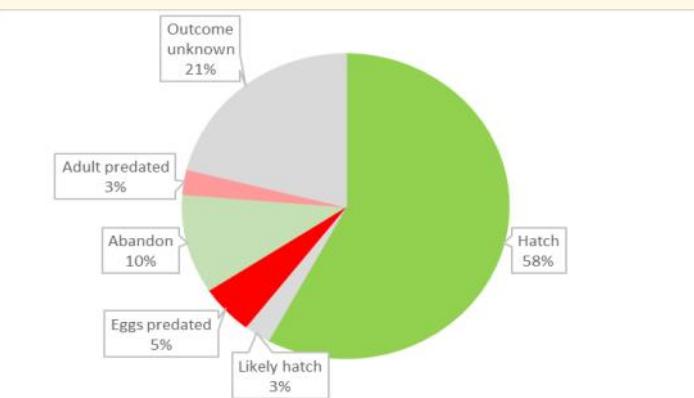
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The first recently fledged **little tern** young were recorded on the 5th July when five were seen learning to fish. Eleven recently fledged young were recorded on the 18th and 23rd July. The final figures were 26 pairs nesting produced **16 fledged young** giving a productivity 0.61.

Little tern require a productivity 0.75 to maintain their population density and the average productivity for Manx little terns over the past 28 years is 0.46; 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.



Clutch size was down from the peak in 2023 suggesting prey availability was particularly good in 2023.



Clutch outcome in 2025



At the Point of Ayre (privately owned) 40 pairs of **Arctic tern** produced **no fledged young**. Fencing to protect ground nesting birds was erected at the Point of Ayre on 9th April. The first Arctic terns recorded at the Point of Ayre were two on the 2nd May. The first eggs were recorded on the 19th May. An estimated 40 pairs nested in total and 43 nests were monitored. A peak count of 38 active nests were recorded on the 11th June, with 3 failing prior to this date and two clutches laid after this date. Sixty percent of clutches hatched and it is likely that many of the 33% of nests categorised as outcome unknown also hatched. Only one clutch was predated from the edge of the Point North colony and this was likely taken gulls. Two clutches were abandoned, one at Ballaghennie that was likely an egg dump following raptor activity at the Point of Ayre and the reason for the second abandonment at Point North is unknown.

The first chicks were recorded on 11th June. Despite an incredibly high hatching rate no chicks fledged as herring gulls predated all the chicks including those that had just started flying. Tern shelters have been redesigned for the 2026 season and it is hoped these will give the chicks better protection but only if they choose to use them.

The main threats to the colony are brown rats, cats, herring gulls, human disturbance and prey availability. Arctic tern are **red** listed on the BOCCIoM and BOCC5.





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In 2025, an estimated 31 **skylark** territories were identified across the NNR by undertaking standard breeding bird surveys. Skylark are **red** listed on both BOCCloM and BOCC5.



An estimated 29 **meadow pipit** territories were identified across the NNR by undertaking standard breeding bird surveys in 2025, and an additional two pairs definitely nested at the Point of Ayre. Meadow pipit are **red** listed on BOCCloM and **amber** listed BOCC5.

Seven locations across the NNR were located where **linnets** were nesting in small colonies. Linnet are **red** listed on BOCCloM and BOCC5. Flocks of up to 100 birds feed on the seed produced by the shingle plants in autumn.



An estimated 17 **stonechat** territories were identified across the NNR by undertaking standard breeding bird surveys in 2025, plus an additional two pairs definitely nested at the Point of Ayre. Stonechat are **green** listed.

In 2025, breeding bird surveys identified an estimated 15 **blackbird** territories. In 2015 a minimum of 17 territories were identified showing little change over this time period.



A press release by the BTO (May 2024) reports that blackbirds are in a rapid decline in southern England and are under threat from the Usutu virus (USUV), a mosquito-borne virus (the vector species is the common house mosquito *Culex pipiens*). The spread of the virus is linked to climate change with conditions in the south-east of England now suitable for the virus hosts to survive. The virus derives its name from the Usutu River in Eswatini, South Africa where the virus was first detected back in the 1950s. Since its introduction into northern Europe, the virus has caused a reduction in song birds in Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. Symptoms of the virus in blackbirds include lethargy, weakness, ataxia (loss of coordination) and seizures. There are no records *Culex pipiens* on the NBN atlas or the MBRP for the Isle of Man, however it does occur in Cumbria and has likely gone unrecorded on the Isle of Man. The spread and impact of this virus demonstrates the importance of monitoring common and widespread **green** listed species and taking action to reduce the pressures the human population is putting on our planet and the surrounding atmosphere we all depend on.

The slacks (wetland areas on the southern boundary of the reserve) dried out early in 2025 and so there were no nesting opportunities for **moorhen** **amber** BOCCloM, **coot** **amber** BOCCloM, and **shoveler** **amber** BOCCloM; **mallard** **amber** BOCCloM did attempt to breed. **Sparrowhawk** **green** and **raven** **green** both nested on the NNR. For the first time since 1998, when wardening first started on the NNR, there was a complete absence of kestrel **red** BOCCloM **amber** BOCC5 hunting over the NNR during the breeding season; they did return after the breeding season suggesting they were nesting a considerable distance away. **Long-eared owl** **red** BOCCloM **green** BOCC5 were recorded a couple of times during the breeding season but evidence of breeding was not confirmed.



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There was only one sighting of a **short-eared owl** (red BOCCloM) in April. Unusually no passage **marsh harriers** (amber BOCC5) or **osprey** (amber BOCC5) were recorded. A flock of 12 non-breeding **chough** (amber BOCCloM) were recorded feeding on the NNR throughout the breeding season. Unlike 2024 no post-breeding flock of **kittiwake** (red BOCCloM and BOCC5) was recorded in July. The large male **eider** (red BOCCloM) flock of up to 200, spent most of the breeding season around Rue Point. A single **Arctic skua** (red BOCC5) was seen in June. 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. Twelve **redshank** red BOCCloM were recorded feeding at Rue Point on the 17th July and a single **knot** red BOCCloM was present during July. Peter Christian located a **shorelark** amber at Point West on the 2nd November, that remained in that area until the 22nd November. A **snow bunting** amber was also seen in the same area a few times in



© Peter Christian

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 in the British Isles. The moth was recorded in low numbers over 10 days between the 19th June and the 29th June 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 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.



The **heath beefly** *Bombylius minor* is red listed and categorised as vulnerable (based on 2001 IUCN guidelines). 2024 was an exceptional year for the heath beefly, in 2025, there were five records in mid July collected over a wide area.

A small moth trap was put out over night on the beach on 18th July and it caught 17 species including the nationally scarce shore wainscot and sand dart. Other less common species included Archer's dart and shuttle-shaped dart. All moths were released unharmed.

Archer's dart
Caterpillars feed on bed-straws and stitchworts



Shore wainscot (NS)
The larvae feed on marram during the night, burrowing in the sand to hide by day



Shuttle-shaped dart
Caterpillars feed on a variety of herbaceous plants



Sand dart (NS)
Caterpillars feed on sea rocket, frosted orache and prickly saltwort



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The rare fern, **moonwort** *Botrychium lunaria* **Amber** listed POCClOM was found on the NNR in good numbers in 2025.



2024 and 2025 were poor years for the **red** listed POCClOM **field gentian** *Gentianella campestris*. 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.

A new colony of **early purple orchid** *Orchis mascula* was discovered by Nick Pinder at Blue Point. This greatly extends the range of this species at the Ayres.



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.



In April 2025, Steve Crellin recorded a new species for the Island at Rue Point, the **gold-fringed mason bee**, *Osmia aurulenta*. The female of this

species utilises empty snail shells to nest in. This species is a dune specialist and nationally scarce.



Week old grey seal pup
Photo taken under licence

For the first time, three **grey seal** pups were born on the beach at the Point of Ayre in October. Also, concerningly, an aborted seal pup foetus was found on the beach. We can not stress enough how important it is that hauled out seals are not disturbed. View with binoculars from at least 100m away. Seals are legally protected from disturbance and reckless or deliberate disturbance could result in a criminal record and a fine. All three pups were raised successfully making it likely that the adults will use this beach again for pupping in 2026.

[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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See the [Biodiversity Action Plans \(BAP\)](#)
for additional information.

