

Dogs must be on leads on the Ayres National Nature Reserve during the bird nesting season – reminder

Dogs must be on leads, no more than 3 metres long, on the Ayres National Nature Reserve (NNR) from 1st April to the 31st July 2026 to comply with the Ayres NNR Byelaws. Failure to do so could result in a Formal Caution, meaning a criminal record for three years; fines of up to £5,000 can also be imposed.

The Ayres NNR is an important refuge for ground nesting birds that have undergone declines in their abundance and retractions in their range across the Isle of Man. Curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher, ringed plover, little tern, Arctic tern, skylark and meadow pipit all lay their eggs on the ground at the Ayres NNR. When wader and tern chick's hatch out they move away from their nests and wander freely under the watchful eye of their parents. It can be up to 5 weeks before these chicks are able to fly and during this time, they are extremely vulnerable.

The restrictions to dog walkers apply to the heathland and the beach and enable ground nesting birds to settle in their breeding areas and raise their chicks.

Visitors to the reserve are asked to stay on the main paths and move away if birds show signs of agitation or distress.

Dogs may be walked off the lead (but under close control) in the **Recreation Area** only. The Recreation Area is at Smeale and is the area of land south of the concrete road (see map).

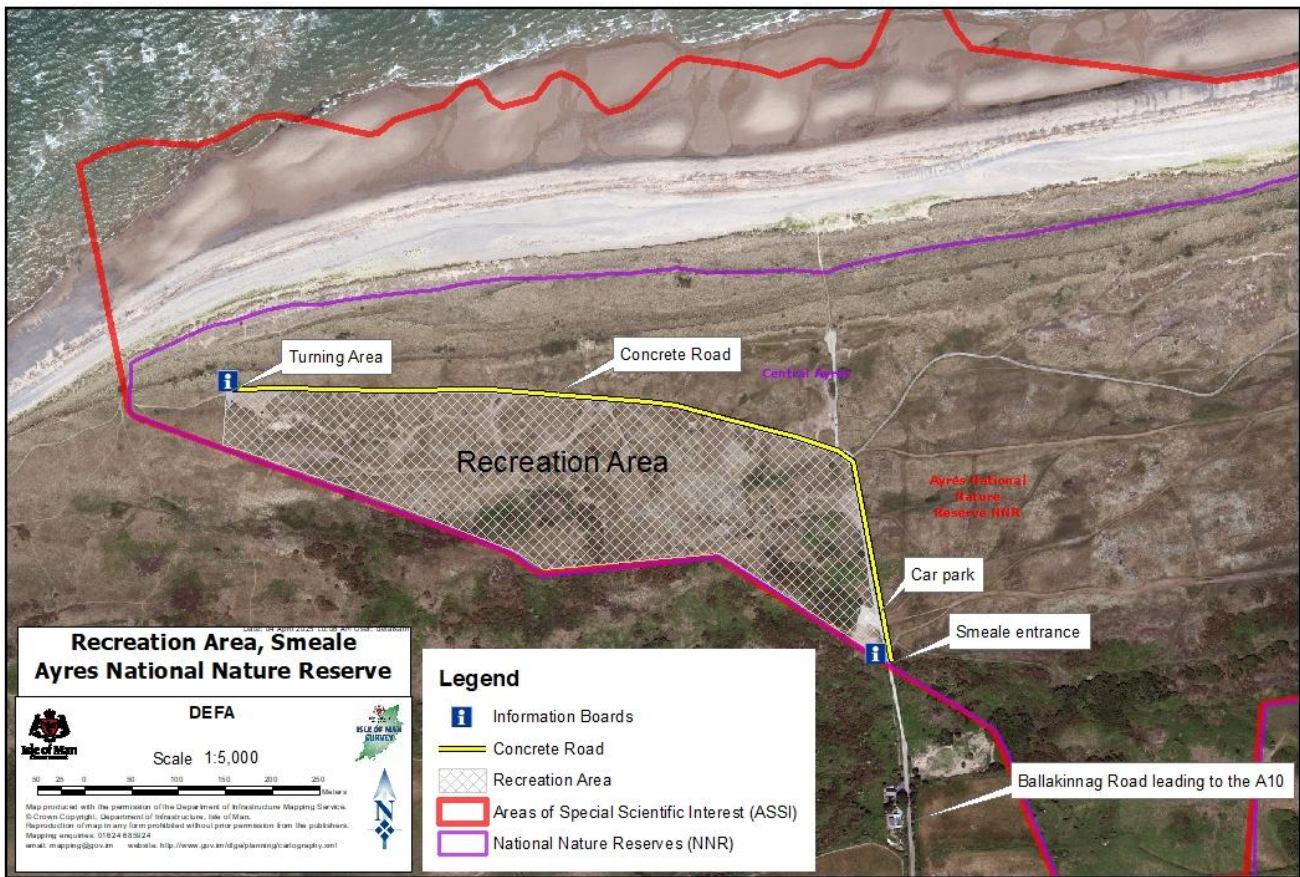


8 Dogs

(1) No person shall bring onto, or permit to remain on, the land any dog unless it is kept under proper control and is prevented from worrying, disturbing or chasing any animal or bird, or causing a nuisance or annoyance to any person.

(2) When required by an authorised person or by a notice affixed on the land by the Department, dogs shall be kept on a lead not exceeding 3 metres in length.

(3) If a dog defecates at any time on the land, the person who is in charge of the dog at that time shall remove the faeces from the land forthwith.



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Skylark are red listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man (BOCCIOM) 2021¹ due to a loss of nesting habitat. They can lay up to three clutches of eggs per breeding season. They make a nest out of grasses on the ground. The chicks rely on camouflage to avoid detection by predators.

¹ Morris N.G. & Sharpe C.M. (2021) Birds of Conservation Concern Isle of Man 2021. British Birds vol. 114, issue 9, pp 526–540