

AYRES NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

UPDATE 13TH April 2024

Rue Point was fenced on the 3rd April in torrential rain; a big thank you to P Faragher Island Contractors, David Andrews of Manx Bird Life and Mark Kerruish, DEFA Countryside Ranger for their assistance in grim conditions. The beach at Rue Point is very wide and has an exceptionally high density of nesting birds and is fenced to prevent people from disturbing the birds and to eliminate the risk of eggs and chicks being trampled. Since the 3rd we've had Storm Kathleen, high spring tides and plenty of rain creating lots of challenges.

Early **ringed plover** nests have been washed out by high spring tides being driven onshore by strong winds and the entire beach on the NNR was swamped. The heathland and dune grassland are currently badly flooded and both access roads on the NNR are currently passable with care (low vehicles should avoid the flood water).

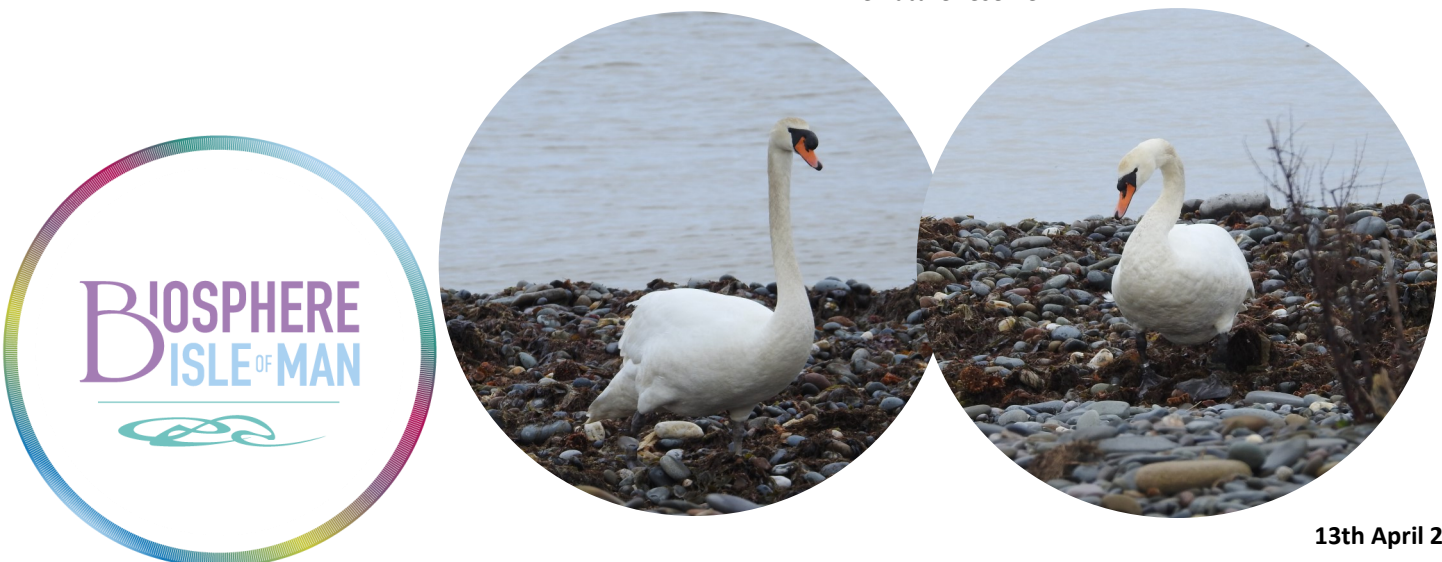
On a more positive note, there are now a series of lagoons on the beach at Rue Point attracting good numbers of feeding passage waders including **sanderling, dunlin, ringed plover, turnstone** and **redshank**. In addition the NNR will provide the perfect nesting habitat for a variety of waterfowl including **coot, moorhen, mallard, teal** and **shoveler**. During the sunny intervals melodious, male **skylarks** are singing high over the heath and grassland, male meadow pipits are also carrying out their parachuting flight display and curlews are bubbling over heath and dunes.

The scrub on the southern boundary of the reserve is full of recently arrived **blackcap, willow warbler** and **chiff chaff** singing away to each other.

Over the next few weeks the number of passage **wheatear** and **whimbrel** should increase as they refuel on the NNR before heading to their breeding grounds further north.

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This lovely couple of **mute swans** were inspecting the beach at Point West recently. We know from colour ringing that the female is over 14 years old and the male is over 6 years of age. Over the years they have been seen in Castletown harbour, Ramsey harbour and on the adjacent Manx Bird Life nature reserve.





Fencing to protect beach nesting birds at Rue Point. Oystercatcher and ringed plover nest along the entire beach on the north-west coast. We can not fence the whole beach to protect these birds, we only fence the areas where they nest in very high densities. Please help these birds to raise their chicks successfully by giving them lots of space. If you walk on the beach stay close to the sea, but be aware chicks move across the entire beach.



Storm Kathleen and spring tides at Rue Point swamping the entire beach. Most of the fence survived! Sadly early ringed plover nests were washed out.



Flood water looking east from the Ballakinnag Road at Smeale



Flood water looking west from the Ballaghennie Road