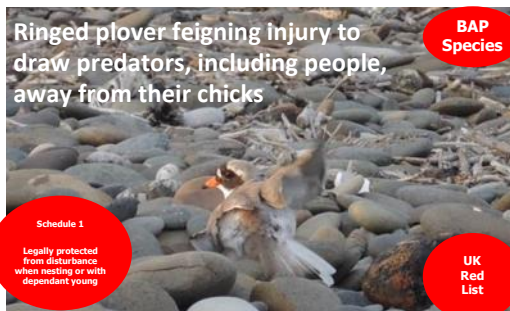


### UPDATE 7th July 2025



**Beach** Important reminder —flightless **chicks** of all species of beach nesting birds move across the entire beach, including from the high tide mark to the sea. Chicks sit tight and rely on their camouflage to keep them hidden; they are at high risk of being trampled. If you are too close to the chicks, adults may show distress and fly around you alarm calling. Both oystercatcher and ringed plover will pretend to be injured, to make you think they are easy prey and draw you away from their precious chicks. If you see either of these behaviours you are too close, you should move away immediately checking the ground for chicks as you go.

Thirty pairs of **little tern** have now been recorded nesting on the NNR. The majority now have chicks but a few are incubating their second clutch of eggs following the failure of their first clutch of eggs. Five little terns have fledged so far. 35 breeding pairs of **oystercatcher** have been recorded nesting between Rue Point and the Point of Ayre. Some pairs have already lost their chicks to predation. **Ringed plover** are at various stages with some having fledged young while others are still incubating eggs. To find out more about beach nesting birds see the **Beach Nesting Birds Biodiversity Action Plan** <https://www.biosphere.im/our-projects/baps>

At the Point of Ayre (privately owned) approximately 95% of **Arctic tern** eggs hatched successfully producing an estimated 70 chicks. Unfortunately approximately two-thirds of these chicks have disappeared and it is likely they have been predated by gulls. On the 28th June a herring gull was spotted eating three Arctic tern chicks in quick succession. On a more positive note, the first chick was seen taking tentative short flights across the beach under the watchful eye of its parents on the 3rd July. This can be a dangerous time for novice flyers, as strong winds can take them out to sea and they may struggle to get back to land. Seven **common gull** chicks have fledged and an additional five chicks are not far behind. Predation of **ringed plover** and **oystercatcher** chicks has been high and again it is likely to be gulls. A few recently fledged young of ringed plover have been seen.



Male eider ducks in eclipse plumage

We currently have two large **eider duck** flocks with approximately 200 birds in each, one based at the Point of Ayre and the other at Rue Point. They are looking a bit odd at the moment and this is because they are in moult and are in eclipse plumage. The males moult into a dull, female-like plumage for a short period after breeding before returning to their more typical black and white plumage.



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Plants growing on the shingle beach have to survive storms, sea spray and droughts. They are specially adapted to survive in these harsh conditions. Some have succulent leaves and stems, like a cactus, to store water and others have waxy leaves to prevent water loss. They have an extensive root system to anchor them in place and they all produce huge amounts of seed to ensure they survive in to the following year. They are important for beach nesting birds because they give chicks somewhere to hide from predators and shelter when it rains. Large flocks of linnet feed on the seed during August and September.



Flowers, seed pods and seed of Sea Sandwort *Honckenia peploides*



Frosted Orache  
*Atriplex laciniata*



Prickly Saltwort  
*Salsola kali*



Prickly Saltwort seed



The nationally scarce **sand dart** was seen on the 28th June feeding on the pale pink flowers of sea rocket which grows on the shingle beach. The caterpillars also feed on sea rocket as well as frosted orache and prickly saltwort.

Sand dart on Sea Rocket



The nationally scarce **beach pill woodlouse** *Armadillidium album* lives under wood on sandy

Sea Mayweed  
*Tripleurospermum maritimum*



7th July 2025





**Dunes and heath** **Meadow pipits** and **skylarks** have beaks-full of food again indicating that they are feeding their second or third brood of chicks. Some pairs of **curlews** still have flightless chicks. A flock of 60 curlew is present on the beach, the majority of these will be failed breeder but hopefully there are a few adults with recently fledged young.

**Common century** *Centaurium erythraea* (pink) and **lesser hawkbit** *Leontodon saxatilis* (yellow)



**Tufted vetch** *Vicia cracca*



The slacks east of the plantation are particularly colourful at the moment

**Meadowsweet** *Filipendula ulmaria*



**Selfheal** *Prunella vulgaris*



The **grayling butterfly** will soon be on the wing; this butterfly favours the sheltered edges of the plantation. This coastal species rests with its wings angled towards the sun to absorb the heat.



**Heath bee flies** *Bombylius minor* should be on the wing. They emit a high pitched hum that is usually heard before the fly (that mimics a bee) is seen. To find out more about these fascinating creatures see the [Heath Bee fly Biodiversity Action Plan](#).

**Hare's-foot clover**

*Trifolium arvense* is currently flowering close to the parking area at Smeale. This ephemeral plant of bare sand is red listed due to its rarity.



The **Silver Hook moth**

occupies marshy places and the caterpillars feed on sedges and grasses. Although the caterpillar food plant is widespread this moth has only been recorded from Ballaugh Curragh ASSI, Ayres NNR and the Dhoon.



The **Garden Tiger moth** is common and widespread and always impressive to see. Adults are flying in July and August.