

UPDATE 12th July 2026



Arctic tern (left) and Roseate tern (right) Point of Ayre 18th June photo by Theo Thomson.



Common gull chicks by Theo Thomson (taken in the presence of L Samson).



Recently fledged chough by Theo Thomson

Beach Sadly it's been a very poor breeding season for beach nesting birds with predation of eggs and chicks by herring gulls and crows taking a heavy toll. Additionally, the supply of sand eel and small herring for Arctic tern and little tern were initially very poor resulting in low egg production (clutches having 2 eggs instead of 3), parents spending long periods of time away from the colony looking for fish leaving chicks and eggs vulnerable to predation and adults not having enough energy to adequately defend their eggs and chicks from avian predators. Over the past week the situation has changed and chicks are currently being well fed.

Twenty pairs of **little tern** attempted to nest on the NNR and all have failed except for two pairs that are still incubating eggs. On the 11th July two juvenile little tern were present at Rue Point with a flock of 14 adults, these juveniles are from another colony around the Irish sea and are not of Manx origins. Thirty pairs of **oystercatcher** have been recorded nesting between Rue Point and the Point of Ayre and only a couple of the chicks have survived. **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](#).

A flock of up to 300 eider ducks is currently present on the NNR between Ballaghennie and 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.



Male eider ducks in eclipse plumage

At the Point of Ayre 30 pairs of **Arctic tern** nested with varying success. Chicks that have taken to using the shelters made by the DEFA sawmill and painted by Manx Wildlife Trust volunteers are surviving and some are at the point of fledging. Predation of **ringed plover** and **oystercatcher** chicks by herring gulls has been high. Invertebrate feeders fared better this year, with eighteen pairs of **common gull** nesting at the Point and there are currently 13 chicks/recently fledged young. The foghorn **chough** fledged three young this year. A roseate tern was briefly present at the Point of Ayre on the 18th June before flying south.



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 130 curlew is present on the beach, hopefully there will good numbers of recently fledged young among these.



A moth trapping session on the beach on the 10th/11th July recorded good numbers of the nationally scarce **sand dart**. The caterpillars feed on sea rocket as well as frosted orache and prickly saltwort. Additionally good numbers of **archer's dart** and **shore wainscot** were recorded.



On the 20th June 2026 Louise Samson, Peter Duncan and Sophie Costain undertook a walked transect of the sand pit area at Rue Point and recorded 33 **scarce crimson and gold moths** over a 500m area. The moth has become restricted to one area of the NNR and is very vulnerable. See the [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) to find out more.



DEFA is taking steps to eradicate the invasive non-native species **Japanese Rose** *Rosa rugosa* from the sand dunes on the Ayres NNR. To find out more about the control follow this [LINK](#).

New Zealand Flax *Phormium tenax* were removed in spring. Best options for the eradication of **Monbretia** *Crocasmia x Crocosmiiflora* are still under investigation.

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Look and listen for heath bee flies. The high pitched buzz of these small flies that mimic a bee are usually heard before they are seen.

They feed on the nectar of cat's-ear and thyme flowers. Adults are on the wing from the 5th July to 28th August. To find out more about this nationally rare species see the [Biodiversity Action Plan](#).



Blue jellyfish *Cyanea lamarckii* seen close to shore at Ballaghennie last week. They feed on plankton which they catch with their tentacles.