



Ayres National Nature Reserve

Walk 2: Wetland warbler walk starting at Smeale entrance

Approximately 3km (2 miles) of flat walking but the ground is uneven in places. Dogs must be on leads, no longer than 3m long, in the bird nesting season when signs are shown on the NNR (usually from the 1st April to 31st July) to comply with Ayres NNR Byelaws. After prolonged rain this route is likely to be inaccessible due to flooding.

Start in the parking area at Smeale entrance [///granny.reintroduced.emerald](http://granny.reintroduced.emerald). Follow the grass path, marked blue on the map, through the wetland areas on the reserve. Return on the same route or use one of the many paths for an alternative route back.



© Pete Hadfield
Goldcrest are our smallest bird occurring on the NNR. The population can swell in winter with migrants from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.



© Peter Christian
Wrens are common and widespread across the NNR. A male wren will make several nests and the female will select the one she most prefers.



© Pete Hadfield
Willow warblers arrive from their wintering grounds in Sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of April. Some years their can be significant numbers of passage birds moving through the Isle of Man. They feed on insects in the sallows and nest in low vegetation near the ground. **Chiffchaff** look very similar but their song mimics their name chiff chaff chiff chaff. Some chiffchaff now overwinter in the British Isles.



© Neil Morris
Sedge warblers arrive from their wintering grounds in western and central Africa in May. Males sing their distinctive song perched on the top of shrubs. Usually 2-3 pairs nest on the NNR.



© Pete Hadfield
Male **whitethroat's** make themselves obvious by singing from the top of shrubs and undertaking a flight display. Whitethroat's will also give a croaking sound when they are agitated. Up to eight breeding pairs on the southern boundary of the NNR. Arrives late April from Africa.

The Merlin App can be a useful guide for identifying and learning bird songs and calls. Males sing to attract females and stake their claim over a nesting territory.



© Pete Hadfield
Male chaffinch



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Early Marsh Orchids
Dactylorhiza incarnata flower from late April to early May. The flowers are a distinctive salmon pink colour. This is a rare orchid on the Isle of Man. They are currently in decline on NNR due to the recent prolonged flooding.



Northern Marsh Orchids *Dactylorhiza purpurella* flowers slightly later than the early marsh orchid and has purple flowers. It is also more widespread and common than the early marsh orchid.



Meadow sweet flowers from June to July.

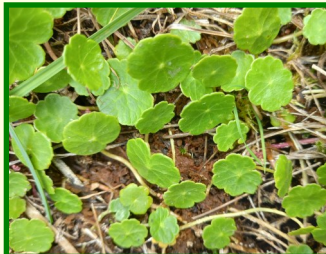


Marsh Bedstraw

Yellow-flag iris grows along the edge of water.



Adder's-tongue fern is an uncommon fern on the Isle of Man found in permanent pastures. The long stalk bearing the spores is thought to look like an adder's tongue.



Marsh pennywort is a common plant that forms patches in wet areas.



Lesser Spearwort



Cavernous crystalwort is a type of liverwort. This plant has only been found at the Ayres on the Isle of Man. It grows on bare mud in the slacks.



Marsh marigold flower in spring and can be found in the slack east of the plantation.





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Creeping willow is a low growing shrub that has a very restricted distribution on the Isle of Man and particularly likes dune slacks. Several rare fungi grow in association with the creeping willow including poison-pie species and *Russula persicina*. The taller trees are grey sallow.



From April to the end of July, the Ayres NNR is an importance place for breeding **curlew**. Curlew lay up to 4 eggs in a nest on the ground. They incubate their eggs for at least 27 days. The chicks are mobile as soon as they hatch out and walk around with their parents looking for invertebrate food. It's another six weeks before the chicks can fly. If you are too close to the chicks the adults will fly around calling repeatedly, if this happens move away as quickly as possible.



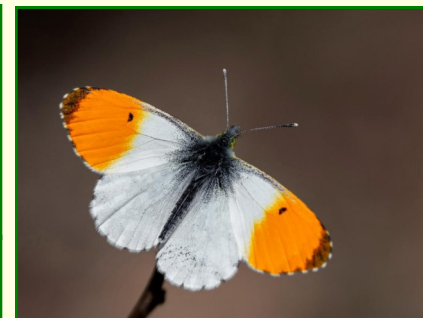
In wet years, there are often good numbers of dragonflies and damsel flies such as this **Emperor**.



There are hundreds of **funnel web spiders** among the purple moor-grass that show up clearly in the early morning dew.



Silverhook is a day flying moth that occurs in the slacks from May to July. This is a rare moth on the Isle of Man. The caterpillars feed on grasses and sedges.












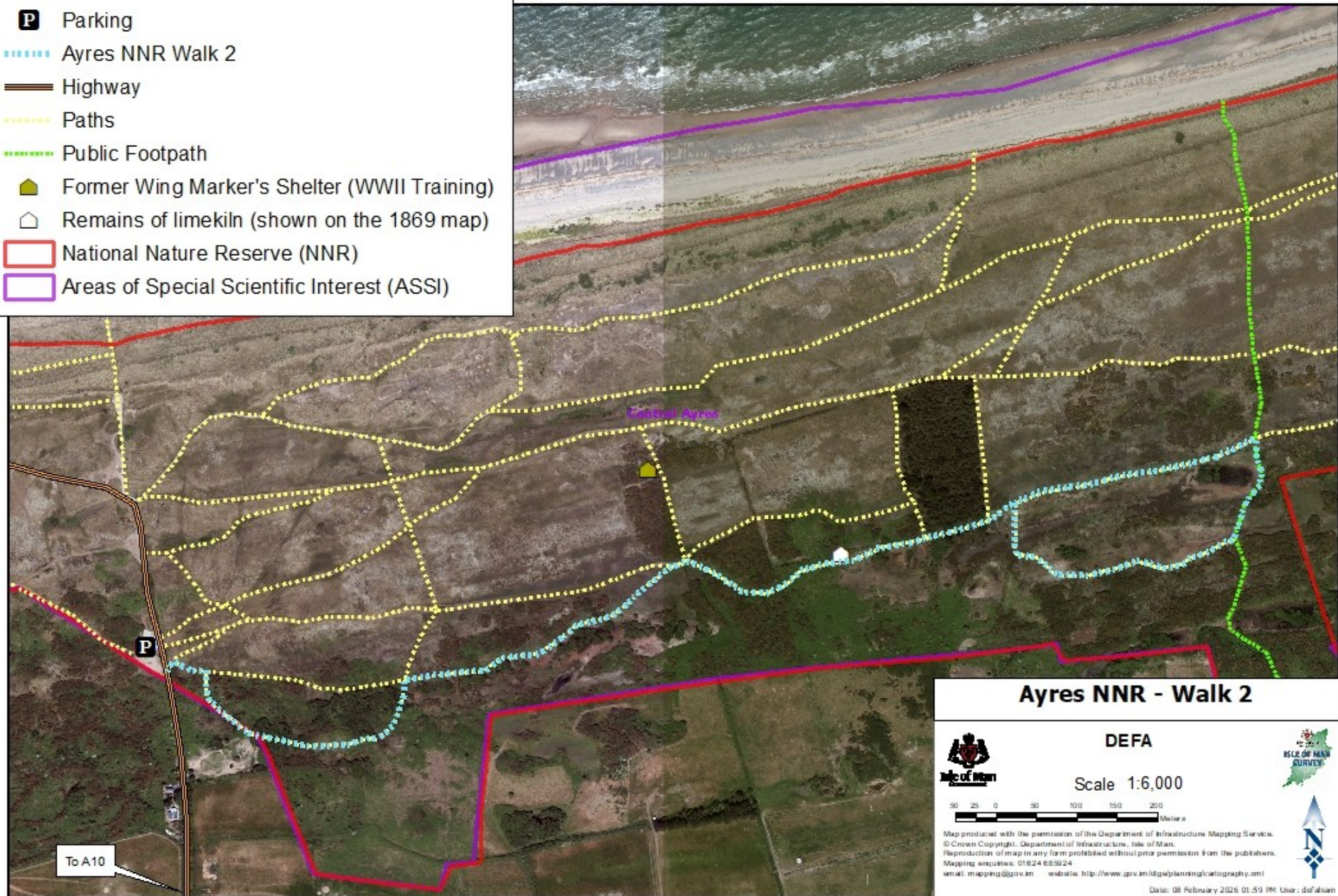
Orange-tip butterflies are one of the earliest to be seen, flying from April until May. Only males have the striking orange tip to their wing. The female lays her eggs on cuckoo flowers that grow in the slacks.



The slacks are an important breeding habitat for legally protected frogs.

Legend

-  Parking
-  Ayres NNR Walk 2
-  Highway
-  Paths
-  Public Footpath
-  Former Wing Marker's Shelter (WWII Training)
-  Remains of limekiln (shown on the 1869 map)
-  National Nature Reserve (NNR)
-  Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)



Ayres NNR - Walk 2



DEFA

Scale 1:6,000



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