



La Société

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



Two new additions to the Conservation Herd. Will Harford-Fox was delighted to accept the Guernsey Press 'Sustainability Hero of the Year award' on behalf of David and the team. Photo courtesy of Lesley Bourgaize.

From the Président

In July it was a huge honour for representatives of La Société to be invited to meet His Majesty, King Charles III, and have the opportunity to highlight our conservation work. To mark the occasion Pierre Ehmann, our Communications Officer, designed and commissioned new graphics (3Mx1.5M) showcasing the reserves we care for and our projects and research areas. The first two focus on marine and terrestrial themes, with the third being an aerial photograph of the Silbe NR looking west towards Fort Saumarez and Lihou Island. On the terrestrial graphic, David, the leader of our Conservation Herd, takes centre stage, with a Glanville Fritillary butterfly, our orchid meadows, and the Barn Owl and Bailiwick Bat Surveys also featuring. The marine poster has an image of a Nature Guernsey rock pooling event, and photographs showing Guernsey Seasearch, BEEP, and the DolFin project. The last space was reserved for Atlantic Scaly Crickets, live specimens of which were shown to His Majesty.

He was intrigued to hear that the Bailiwick of Guernsey holds an internationally important proportion of the known sites worldwide. Nicky Harris, Marine Biology Section Secretary, spoke to His Majesty about the BEEP project, telling him that seed from Guernsey Eel Grass was being used to repopulate Eel Grass beds in Wales. Becky Ogier, our Education and Conservation leader, detailed the work that she and Sarah Allez are doing in primary schools, and Richard Hocart, La Société's Editor, was on hand to field any questions His Majesty may have had regarding our annual Transactions and our organisation's history. The King apologised that his visit was a fleeting one but encouraged us to continue with the good work that La Société does. When His Majesty departed, the displays were opened to the general public. The new graphics were also used at the West Show, Viaër Marchi and several other events this summer, so hopefully, many of you will have seen them for yourselves. I want to take this opportunity to thank Pierre and Lesley Bourgaize for their help in organising our display, and also those who helped set it up the day prior to the event.

In June I reported that Dave Bartram would be stepping down as the Conservation Herd Manager and that we were looking at ways the project could continue. The benefits of grazing are well documented and in an ideal world, more of our precious habitats would benefit from exposure to animals be they cattle, goats, or sheep. Will Harford-Fox has assumed control of the herd and intends to increase the monitoring of the sites they visit. Council has agreed to underwrite the costs incurred by the herd for two years, by which time we hope to have gained funding from the land owners of the sites grazed and/or attracted corporate sponsors. I reported that Mike Smith, who has been with the herd since its creation, was also stepping down. However, Mike has decided to remain on board, and I am sure he and Will make a great team. Once again, I would like to record my thanks to Dave for his hard work and take this opportunity to recognise the dedication of the volunteers in supporting the Herd Managers both past and present. The Conservation Herd enjoyed recent success at the Pride of Guernsey ceremony, receiving the 'Sustainability Hero of the Year' award. My thanks and congratulations to everybody involved with this project.

In January, we launched our new corporate membership scheme, the new package which costs £2000 is not just a way for LSG to raise funds but we also see it as a partnership between ourselves and the member organisations. For corporate members, our 'Education Team' can arrange Corporate Social Responsibility days (CSR), including physical work on our reserves, lunch and learn sessions or opportunities to engage in citizen science projects. Other possibilities are bird ringing demonstrations, moth trapping, and bat walks; we can tailor events or workshops to suit individual companies' requirements. With sustainability being the latest buzzword, and the drive to promote Guernsey as a leader in Green Finance, I hope companies will see joining LSG as a natural extension to their commitment to the local environment. If you would like further details, please contact Becky Ogier ecl@societe.org.gg or me president@societe.org.gg

Nature Guernsey continues to provide opportunities for the wider public to acquaint themselves with the natural world and the work we do. These events (five or six single discipline events and our Family Day at Pleinmont) cover a wide range of subjects and are a good opportunity for us to gain publicity, and recruit new members. At the inception of Nature Guernsey, it had been intended to organise more events similar to the annual one we hold at Pleinmont, but these require a lot of pre-planning and are a major time commitment. Lesley Bourgaize, who is currently also our Reserves Secretary and runs the Natural History section, has expressed a wish to step back from the Nature Guernsey role. For some time, I have thought the aims of Nature Guernsey dovetail perfectly with the work of the Education Team; Council has endorsed this idea, and we hope to have plans in place for 2025.

On behalf of LSG, I met with Mike Brown, President of the National Trust of Guernsey, and Jessie Jennings, CEO of the Nature Commission, to discuss the proposed changes to the Island Development Plan. We discussed the proposals in depth and highlighted several areas of concern. Collectively, we oppose any development on greenfield sites and agree that brownfield sites should be prioritised. Our organisations continue to be concerned that extensions to curtilage are still being permitted and question if biodiversity gains are being delivered in the long term. We have concerns that the system is open to abuse if regular checks are not made following permissions being granted. We welcome the increase in Areas of Biodiversity Importance (ABI) but question the level of protection these areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) have. A lack of appropriate management can result in the loss of the flora and fauna that the land was designated for in the first place, with the loss being used as a reason to seek planning permission.

We considered whether some development could be permitted on derelict horticultural sites. My personal view is perhaps some limited development could be allowed on a site-by-site basis. If planning permissions were granted this could finance the clearing of unsightly glasshouses and create habitats where flora and fauna can thrive. Some of the larger sites could have new green lanes or cycle paths.

In a recent Guernsey Press article we questioned whether there was sufficient commitment to Biodiversity Net Gain on new developments. Often, the proposed environmental mitigation is included in the gardens of the new houses; it is unrealistic to think these areas could survive in what are often very small spaces. Some type of off-setting scheme could be introduced, this would help to fund conservation work on some of our special areas such as the cliffs and coastal grasslands.

Please be assured that we fully understand the need for more housing, however, before we start using green fields, we must take full advantage of the opportunities that brownfield sites afford us.

My term of office ends in March 2025, and our organisation needs to find a new President and, ideally, a Vice President; the latter post has been vacant for the past two years. The role is a very varied one, and everybody brings different areas of expertise to it. If you would be interested in the role, or think you know of somebody who may be, please contact Kate Lee or me.

Finally, it is with great sadness, that I have to report the loss of two stalwarts of La Société, Barry Wells and Rodney Collenette. Barry passed away at the end of July; he had been a member of the Ornithology and Entomology Sections and served a term as Vice President of La Société. Barry was instrumental in the formation of Nature Guernsey and in recent times was very involved with the Pollinator Project, having been a founding member of this group. He was an excellent photographer and had generously permitted La Société to use any of his photographs for publicity or promotional purposes. In Barry's honour the Pollinator Project has announced the Barry Wells Award for Young Photographers, details of which can be found on page 22 of this Communiqué.

Rodney Collenette was our President for three years from 2011. In addition to his time as President he also served as an ordinary member of the Council, on and off, for nearly twenty years. His financial advice was much appreciated, and up to the time of his death, he still served on the board of Environment Guernsey Ltd where his experience and business acumen were greatly valued. When the Colin McCathie NR, aka Vale Pond, one of Guernsey's premier birdwatching sites and one which we had been managing for many years, came up for sale, Rodney was very involved in raising the funds which enabled LSG to purchase it. Rodney will also be remembered for his great sense of humour.

Our thoughts are with Barry and Rodney's family and friends at this difficult time.

Trevor Bourgaize, President

Nature Guernsey Report

Following the three events reported on in the last Communiqué, the next Nature Guernsey outing was planned to coincide with National Insect Week. This took the form of a Bug Hunt which was organised in conjunction with the Entomology Section, and held at Bordeaux Mound on Saturday, June 22nd. It was a lovely, sunny afternoon and lots of really engaged children, armed with pots and nets, found all manner of things for our volunteers to identify – butterflies, ladybirds, lacewings, spiders, you name it, they found it. We also sneaked in some moths caught overnight in the garden of a volunteer who lives close to Bordeaux.



Photos of the Bug Hunt. Photo courtesy of Emma Boughey.

One young man potted a cricket which he showed to two members of Entomology Section. Something about the specimen seemed different and so it was kept to be photographed. Research by our local entomologists identified this as a Brown-spotted Bush Cricket, a species they were unfamiliar with. On sending a photograph to the British Orthoptera Society, confirmation of the identification was received. The cricket is a new species not just for Guernsey or even the Channel Islands, but also unrecorded in Britain! Quite a coup! This is not the first time a Nature Guernsey event has turned up an interesting and unusual creature, showing that they are not only encouraging children to actively engage with nature, but are adding to the island's database.



Brown-spotted Bush Cricket. Photo courtesy of Trevor Bourgaize.

On Wednesday, August 28th, Nature Guernsey, this time in conjunction with the Bat Section, organised an evening walk at Saumarez Park. As always, this was an extremely popular event and we were delighted that so many members of the public came to find out more about our natural world. The evening started with a fascinating introductory talk 'Bats are Brilliant' which contained information on the species we have in the Bailiwick, why they are important and how we can help to protect them. Bat detectors were then handed out and as we walked around the park, we could both hear and see bats, who came out a short time after sunset and put on a marvellous display for our enjoyment.

Our final event of the year was the 'Late Summer Family Event' held on Sunday September 1st at La Société's land at Pleinmont. As usual, the first activity of the day was to be moth trap emptying, and Entomology Section was delighted to be joined by three 'moth-ers' from the UK who also set their traps overnight at Pleinmont, excited to see which species might be found in this coastal habitat, quite different from their normal trapping areas.

Early Sunday morning, the traps were collected from the various overnight positions and brought to the gazebos for checking and recording. Unfortunately, although the (very!) early morning had been dry, rain began to fall. To continue or cancel – this is always one of the most difficult decisions to make. On studying the weather radar, it was decided that the rain was moving through quite quickly and the event should go ahead as planned. Although the rain did not stop quite as soon as we would have liked, the gazebos provided shelter for the moth trap emptying to begin, and there were indeed some interesting finds including three species of hawk-moth, with a Death's-head Hawk-moth, being the most unusual. This is a spectacular beast, and was new to many people!

Nature Guernsey was delighted to be gifted a 'moth tent' by the visiting 'moth-ers'. In reality, a mosquito tent, using it allows a trap to be opened without the moths flying away before being identified, but also meant our younger visitors could 'get up close and personal' with many species, and it was extremely popular.



Death's Head Hawk-moth and 'Moth tent'. Photos courtesy of Emma Boughey.

As the weather improved, we were gradually able to set up all the other activities and were delighted that many people had not been put off but came along to join us.

La Société's Education/Conservation officers were on hand to help with making collages and colouring activities while keeping an eye on the bird identification game, which proved to be quite a challenge!



Children's activities. Photos courtesy of Emma Boughey.

The Bug Hunt was as popular as always with a good variety of invertebrates spotted in the 'weedy strip' sown with a wildlife crop. These included Field Grasshoppers, Great Green Bush Crickets, Earwigs and various butterflies.

Bird ringing continued throughout the morning, and although hopes were not high for this weather-dependent activity, a steady trickle of birds were caught, including Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Dunnock, Wren and Whitethroat. This latter species was especially interesting, as it was on passage to its wintering grounds in Africa. All birds were ringed, winged and weighed, before being released unharmed.

Bat Section's display attracted a lot of interest with youngsters keen to try out the 'Bat Sounds Board' which contains information about all the species found in the Bailiwick and allows us to listen to their Echolocation calls. ('Seeing with Sound' beyond the range of human hearing)

As well as the usual activities, we were delighted to welcome the two youngest members of the Conservation Herd, who were a popular addition to the event, and seemed unfazed by all the attention!

During the morning, prizes were presented to the winners of the competition we ran at the West Show, when entrants were asked to guess the number of bird species recorded in Guernsey since records began. The answer, up to the end of 2023, is an impressive 333. While no one had exactly the right answer we had some very near guesses and congratulations go to the winners in the different age categories. The prizes were given out by La Société's President, who is a knowledgeable birder and bird ringer.

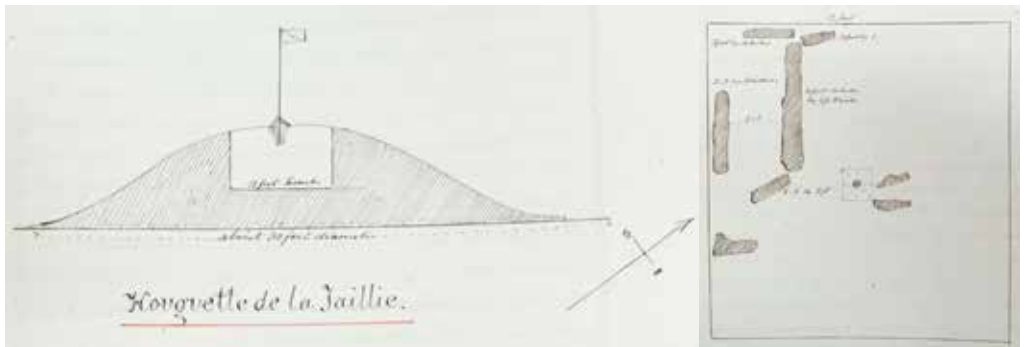
As always, I cannot finish this report without saying thank you to all the volunteers who give so freely of their time, so that these events can go ahead. Enthusing the younger generation, and instilling in them a love of nature, is an important tool in ensuring that the natural world is protected in the future.

Lesley Bourgaize – Chairperson – Nature Guernsey.

Section Reports

Archaeology Section

La Houguette de la Taillie is a prehistoric burial mound in Alderney and was investigated by Francis Lukis in 1853. The site is on the high ground of La Grande Blaye close to the airport and (as part of the Alderney Airport Runway Rehabilitation Project) it was decided that it should be re-examined. The monument was described by Lukis as a mound some 30ft in diameter and 6ft high. In 1853 he cleared an area of 12 square feet to a depth of two feet and discovered large stones which proved to be part of a cist; he also recovered a small amount of flint and prehistoric pottery during his excavation. Although it has been buried under scrub for many years it is known that the mound, plus at least one associated stone, were still there in the 1920's (Kendrick 1928).



'La Houguette de la Taillie', drawings by Francis du Bois Lukis. Courtesy of Guernsey Museum.

The Alderney Wildlife Trust kindly cleared the scrub from the area of the monument and in early October the States Archaeologists, with help from the Archaeology Section and the Alderney Society, spent a week excavating at the site. A large trench was dug to target the centre of the burial mound and three smaller trenches tested the surrounding area. Worked flint was found in most of these trenches indicating prehistoric activity, but there was no sign of the mound or stone structures found by Lukis. Sadly we have to conclude that La Houguette de la Taillie must have been completely destroyed, perhaps by agricultural activity during The Occupation or maybe during the early airport construction. In addition to this main excavation, a couple of exploratory trenches were also dug against the wall surrounding La Blaye. In deposits below this wall a quantity of worked flint and pottery was recovered, indicating prehistoric activity in this area too.



Excavations at the site of 'La Houguette de la Taillie'. Photo courtesy of Philip de Jersey.

Over the summer we have been washing and sorting the many finds recovered during February's excavation of the medieval drawbridge pit at Castle Cornet. The Junior Section kindly assisted us with some of this processing work. It appears that the pit was deliberately filled in around the middle of the 15th century when this entrance to the castle had been superseded by the barbican gate below. The finds from the pit include large quantities of animal bone, pottery and building waste, plus some interesting small finds. We hope to give a talk on this excavation in the new year.

During the summer we also followed up on the castle theme with four fieldtrips to Guernsey's castles: Castle Cornet, Vale Castle, Le Château des Marais and the site of the enigmatic Corbière Castle.

If you would like to join the Section please contact archaeology@societe.org.gg

Tanya Walls - Archaeology Section Secretary.

Astronomy Section

Over the summer, Guernsey skies have been host to the Aurora Borealis and a visitor from the outermost reaches of the Solar System.

Displays of the Aurora Borealis were seen in May this year and again in October.



Aurora Borealis from Vazon, 10th October 2024. Image credit Martin Sarre.



Aurora Borealis from Vazon, 10th October 2024. Image credit Jacques Loveridge.

The aurora are the manifestations of huge solar storms, when solar particles are hurled towards Earth where they interact with the Earth's magnetic field. Displays as far south as Guernsey are associated with peaks in solar activity. The Sun is reaching the maximum phase of the 11-year solar cycle and it is expected that the Sun's polar magnetic field will flip shortly and solar activity will start to wane



International Space Environmental Services Radio Flux for Solar Cycle 25. Graph adapted from: NOAA/NWS.



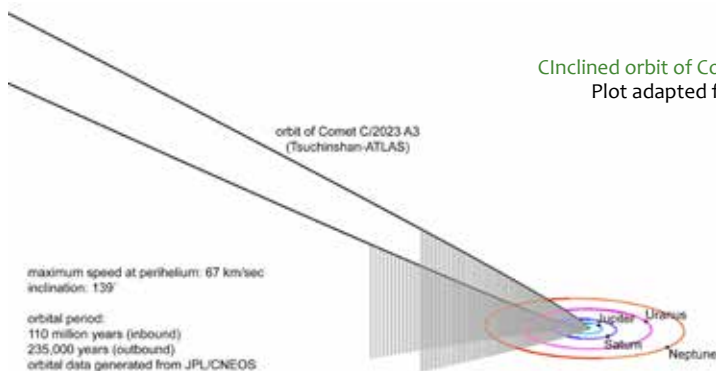
Aurora Borealis from from Guernsey, 10th May 2024, showing columns and the corona overhead. Image credit Nick Després.

In October the inner Solar System was host to a distant traveller from the outermost reaches of the Solar System, the Oort Cloud. Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS, made its closest transit past the Sun on 27th September 2024 and came within approximately 44 million miles of Earth on 12th October 2024. Comets are the frozen leftovers from the formation of the Solar System, comprising dust, rock and ices. When frozen they are sizable bodies, easily as large as Guernsey. As a comet approaches the Sun, it heats up and gushes dust and gases that forms a tail which stretches away from the Sun for millions of miles.



Comet C2023/A: Tsuchinshan-ATLAS. Image credit: Jacques Loveridge.

Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS has an inclined orbit with respect to the orbital plane of the planets and an orbital period estimated to be approximately 80 thousand years.



Inclined orbit of Comet C2023/A: Tsuchinshan-ATLAS.
Plot adapted from data provided by JPL/CNEOS.

However, because of its composition it might break up long before it returns. The inclined orbits and long orbital periods of comets, led astrophysicists to hypothesise the existence of the Oort Cloud, which marks the gravitational edge of the Solar System and extends out almost half way to our nearest star system and Proxima Centauri which has its own planetary system.

Jean Dean – Astronomy Section Secretary.

Bat Section

Contact Laura Harrison email bats@societe.org.gg for details of the next Bat Section meeting at Candie. New members are always welcome.

If you find an injured bat please contact the GSPCA direct on 257261 or 07781 104082 (24 hour emergency). Any bat queries can be sent by e-mail to bats@societe.org.gg

Botany Section

Please 'save the date' for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's New Year Plant Hunt on Sunday 29th December, 2pm, meet at Petit Bôt.

For further enquiries about the monthly Botany walks please contact Anna or Helen by email: botany@societe.org.gg

Join the Botany Section's Facebook page to find details of the monthly walks and recent plant photos. Once you have joined you can add your own images. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310943042297921/>

Entomology Section

It's been a fairly quiet summer as far as insect hunting goes, but we have managed to find some good number of insects as well as hosting some expert visitors from the UK whose knowledge and time was much appreciated.

Paul Brock, author of many identification and guide books such as "Britain's Insects" and "A comprehensive guide to Insects of Britain and Ireland" and his wife Helen visited for a week from the end of June into July. With a list of most-wanted insects to try and find we had a plan of action and locations to search during the week. The first day at Mont Herault showed a huge number of species including some great finds such as the beetle *Protaetia morio* and a good look at the local ants *Formica pratensis* and *Temnothorax albipennis*.

I am grateful to Andy Smith for stepping in as a guide for the rest of the week as I dealt with some urgent family matters. They had a successful time searching for and finding species such as the ants *Strumigenys perplexa* and *Messor capitatus* which are not known on the UK mainland. The week was a wonderful show of what Guernsey has to offer a visiting entomologist.

Messor capitatus.

Photo courtesy of Andy Marquis.



In August and September we received a group of expert moth trappers from the UK who came along with Generators and several moth traps, they normally visit Jersey but were tempted here for two nights first. The first night at Icart headland exceeded expectations with some lovely migrants and rare local moths with species such as Dusky Scalloped Oak and more than a dozen Bordered Grey. The star of the show was a Cloaked Carpet which is a new addition to the Guernsey list and the migrant Silver-striped Hawk-moth providing the spectacular.



Cloaked Carpet. Photo courtesy of Andy Marquis.

The second night was the Nature Guernsey family day at Pleinmont where with two generators and some truck batteries we ran a total of 8 moth traps around the headland, in the woods and down the cliffs. The morning showed us some spectacular mothing with many migrant species including Convolvulus Hawk-moth and a very noisy Death's-head Hawk-moth which happily squeaked away when handled. We also saw more than 70 Silver Y, 12+ Pearly Underwing and a Pale Shoulder which was the third record for Guernsey. See the Nature Guernsey report for more details.



Pale Shoulder. Photo courtesy of Andy Marquis.

Across the two nights we trapped 81 species at Icart, 104 species at Pleinmont and a total of 134 species across the two sites which showed us that there is some difference in the moth fauna between the two sites. This is valuable data which will help show trends between the years and allow us to research what might be different between seemingly similar sites.

The Entomology Section learned a huge amount about field moth trapping, trap building, and the set-ups involved for such events with the military precision of the team demonstrating to us how it is done. The recent purchase by the section of a generator and equipment for field trapping I hope will allow us to run our own events with a similar level of success as well as continuing research at remote sites where power is not available.

Again, Guernsey's potential for Entomologists and Lepidopterists shone through and I hope will generate even more visitors seeking out our unique natural history. Our visitors saw eight species of moth new to them which is quite an achievement for those who have been trapping for 35+ years.

Andy Marquis – Entomology Section Secretary

Family History Section

The research room at the Russels, Les Cotils is open on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month between 10am and 12 noon and also by appointment at all other times. If you can't make the Saturday's, kindly email researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk and we will arrange to open up for you.

Maria van der Tang, Family History Section Secretary.

Any general Family History queries should be addressed to The Family History Section, PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3TG. Alternatively email Maria van der Tang researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

Historic Buildings Section

On Saturday 23rd November there will be an illustrated talk by Eric Grimsley entitled "Considering the wood-carvers who produced the fine nineteenth-century carved doors in Guernsey" in the Frossard Theatre, Candie at 7.30pm. All welcome.

New members are always very welcome to attend, but should contact John McCormack (tel. 720303; e-mail mrjam@cwgsy.net) beforehand in case of alterations or final instructions. Those attending regularly should kindly ensure that they are already members of La Société.

Marine Biology Section

The Marine Section has had a successful summer of activities and surveys thanks to several ongoing projects, both within the LSG and through partnership research groups including BEEP and Seasearch. Please see the BEEP update overleaf. For this autumn update I wanted to provide a spotlight on seal surveys, which are part of pan-channel monitoring work. Atlantic Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) are the main seal species seen in the Channel Islands, with populations in Guernsey's Bailiwick found in Herm's Ramsar site and around the Hanois lighthouse. Jersey, Alderney, Guernsey and the Normandy region all collaborate in completing census data as the grey seals are known to travel long distances for foraging and are not necessarily localised to specific haul-out locations. For the 2024 season La Société Guernesiais has been coordinating with the States of Guernsey's surveys, and managing to conduct 3 counts for July, August and October. The Herm population stayed relatively static in number throughout the three seasons, though our October survey graced surveyors with sightings of two young and healthy looking seal pups amongst the Humps Islets!

A special thanks goes to The Guernsey Sailing Trust and Seascape Guernsey for helping to run the surveys and assisting with the counting and photographing of individuals.



A female adult grey seal sighted in the July survey.
Photo courtesy of Nicky Harris.

Thank you to everyone who has responded to the recent call out to join the Marine Biology Section mailing list. We will be setting out some events and meet ups in short order. If you have not already responded and would be interested in marine focused events please email marinebiology@societe.org.gg.

Nicky Harris, Marine Biology Section Secretary

Related Projects - Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP)

Over the course of what seems a very quick summer, Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP) partners and volunteers have been busy recording eelgrass across the islands. Since May, several beach walkover surveys have been completed across our shores, such as Salarie Corner (Guernsey), Fisherman's Bay (Herm) and Longis Bay (Alderney). These surveys have helped re-assess eelgrass species presence, location, upper boundary extent and plant morphometrics (e.g. total number of eelgrass shoots, blade/leaf length, width and condition). Opportunistic sightings of eelgrass have also been made within the St Peter Port harbour area (Cow Bay) by our project partners and members of the public. We are extremely grateful for everyone's voluntary effort to help record eelgrass across our islands, particularly our project partners at La Société Guernesiaise and Guernsey Seasearch, including our new friends at the Nature Commission.

Outreach and engagement activities during this period comprised of BEEP volunteers attending key island events, such as the Havelet Bay Regatta and providing talks to the public and interested groups upon the importance of eelgrass. A small number of BEEP volunteers also undertook formal training with BSAC on how to deliver snorkel guided tours. In the future, we hope to develop a small set of public snorkel events in collaboration with other bodies, such as the Nature Commission, with the aim to show islanders eelgrass up close whilst in the sea.

In addition to our surveying and outreach works, we successfully won the community fund from the Channel Islands CO-OP. These valuable funds will help support an assessment of the organic carbon stock of the sediment within selected eelgrass beds across the Bailiwick. Eelgrass beds are considered a 'nature-based solution to climate change' by 'locking away' organic carbon (also known as 'blue carbon') within the sands below their complex root system (known as rhizomes). Earlier this year, a local BSc student initiated a new study of eelgrass organic stock levels on Guernsey and Herm.



Our team about to go out for the October survey.
Photo courtesy of Julia Henney.



Eelgrass. Photo courtesy of Tim Harvey.



Herm eelgrass survey.
Photo courtesy of Jessi Jennings.

The BEEP assessment aims to build upon this crucial research by expanding to other known sites of eelgrass across the islands. Sediment samples within the selected eelgrass beds have already been collected by BEEP volunteers and will be analysed over the winter by a UK laboratory. We hope to publicise the results in spring 2025.

Over the next few months we will be reviewing our eelgrass work-streams and aim to give a public talk on our 2024 escapades in mid-December. Please keep your eyes peeled for this future event to be advertised, in due course. If you would like to know more about BEEP please see here: <https://societe.org.gg/wp/beep/> or contact marine@alderneywildlife.org for further details.

**Mel Broadhurst-Allen – Living Seas Co-ordinator,
Alderney Wildlife Trust**



BEEP survey on Herm. Photo courtesy of Mel Broadhurst-Allen.

Ornithology Section

Summer and Early Autumn 2024

Balearic Shearwater Survey

The steering group has decided to expand the survey to cover all seabirds and marine mammals. To date, they have not been very lucky with the weather and it seems unlikely that they will be able to find dates in September due to poor weather. Results will follow in due course.

Outdoor Meetings

In May, we were joined by four visitors to the island to take a look at the recent work carried out at Le Pré d'Enfer and afterwards had a bar supper at Le Fleur du Jardin.

The June meeting was an enjoyable morning walk along the cliffs west of Le Gouffre and back through the lanes. We heard singing Blackcap – males seem to hold territory in every small dell and dip along the cliffs where streams run down to the coast. Alongside resident birds, we also had three swifts hunting along the cliffs and, further inland a small flock of House Martins.

In mid-June we organised two boat trips around Herm and the Humps which were well supported. Skipper Richard Keen missed out the Humps on one trip and took us up to Sark where we were able to have good views of the Guillemot colonies on Les Burons and Les Autelets.

In August we had an open meeting. After an evening meal at the Imperial, people made their way up to Pleinmont for an Owl Watch. This is one of the best spots to see hunting Barn Owls at dusk, although sightings have been disappointingly low this year. However, we were in luck and everyone had an excellent view of one Barn Owl that used a nearby pole as a look-out for a few minutes before flying over the field and catching a vole.

September means the autumn migration was well underway and we held a Swallow Watch at Jerbourg. The weather was kinder than in the past couple of years and people were able to see hirundines, mainly swallows, gathering in the area before heading off in groups, to Jersey and the continent. I made a return visit the following weekend and counted 216 heading out to sea in just ten minutes.

Indoor Meetings

June – a short business meeting was followed by a slide show presentation of spring migrants. It is available to view on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU-6o6dB3z8>



September – after the summer break, the Section had a Zoom presentation given by Harry Ewing of the BTO about his work with Curlew conservation. Members were sent the link to watch at home as there was no parking in Candie Road, so it was disappointing that only a few people watched. Many of us enjoy the sight and sound of our overwintering Curlew. It is a red-listed species and numbers have decreased alarmingly in recent years. Work to find out how best to help boost breeding success is important if future generations are to see them in Guernsey. The recording is available to view – I recommend forwarding to 2 minutes 40 seconds when he starts his presentation.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8791234567>

October – a Zoom presentation given by Rick Simpson from the charity Wader Quest. It has not happened as I write these notes but will have taken place by the time they are circulated in the Communiqué.

The Barn Owl Survey

The survey season has now finished. For various reasons, several of the sites have not been surveyed as intensively as in the past two years and contact has been lost with a couple. Chris has not ringed any of the chicks mainly due to work commitments and his involvement with the Balearic Shearwater Survey. As information has been rather 'hit and miss' this year as circumstances change, there will not be a written report. It seems that Barn Owls are probably holding their own and where breeding has been confirmed, the chicks mostly seem to have fledged. We will be keeping in touch with landowners and plan to carry out the next survey in 2027.

Looking ahead

Wednesday 4th December – Indoor Meeting – please note the change of day as late-night shopping on the Thursday makes parking difficult. A short business meeting followed by Christmas refreshments and a presentation entitled ‘Autumn Birds’.

Interesting Sightings

Great White Egret (Scarce) Vale Pond, 5th May (KC) **Spoonbill** (Scarce) Vale Pond, 1st May (DS)
Osprey (Scarce) Capelles 8th May, (RAF) **Honey-Buzzard** (Scarce) Birds seen over at various
locations between 10th – 13th August (sev. obs.) **Hen Harrier** (Scarce) Pleinmont, 4th June (VF, JF)
Stone Curlew (Vagrant) Pleinmont, 6th July (MAG) **Knot** (Scarce) Les Bordes 13th May, (JH)
Ruff (Scarce) Vale Pond, 16th August (JH et al) **Spotted Redshank** (Very rare) Vale Pond, 19th May
(VF) **Lesser Yellowlegs (1st Guernsey Record)** La Grande Mare, 3rd September (MAG, AJB et al)
Yellow-legged Gull (Scarce) Perelle and a second bird at the Reservoir, 29th June (WRT)
Turtle Dove (Scarce) Pleinmont, 5th May (MPL et al) **Cuckoo** (Scarce) Pleinmont, 5th May (MAG)
Nightjar (Very rare) Bordeaux, 20th May (ADM)

Hoopoe (Scarce) near lane to Creux Mahié, 8th May (via JH) **Wryneck** (Scarce) Fort Hommet, 6th September (JH et al) **Blue-headed Wagtail** (Scarce) Mont Herault, 5th May, (MPL et al) **Nightingale** (Very rare) Icart, 11th May (MAG) **Melodious Warbler** (Scarce) Pleinmont, 9th August (JH, DS) **Hooded Crow** (Vagrant) Catorocq, 1st May (MAG) **Cirl Bunting** (Rare) 23rd May, Bordeaux (TJB)

List of observers

AJB Tony Bisson, TJB Trevor Bourgaize, KC Kevin Childs, RAF Rod Ferbrache, JF Jill Froome, VF Vic Froome, MAG Mark Guppy, JH Jamie Hooper, MPL Mark Lawlor, ADM Andy Marquis, AJB Tony Bisson, TJB Trevor Bourgaize, KC Kevin Childs, RAF Rod Ferbrache, JF Jill Froome, VF Vic Froome, MAG Mark Guppy, JH Jamie Hooper, MPL Mark Lawlor, ADM Andy Marquis.

Gallery

Bird of the Year – Lesser Yellowlegs

There was quite a lot of confusion initially as it was seen at the same time as a wood Sandpiper which is very similar. Leg colour was important but waders often have their legs in water. This bird was a vagrant, blown off course from its home in America. It is a small, neat and very elegant wader.



First recorded Lesser Yellowlegs in Guernsey. Photo courtesy of Andy Stoling.

Some of our more common birds

Firecrest are found in wooded areas where they forage for grubs and insects. around the island and numbers have increased in recent years. The song is so high pitched that many people cannot hear it.

Firecrest.

Photo courtesy of Andy Stoling.



Long-tailed Tit are also birds of woodland. They are usually seen in family groups as they work their way through a stand of trees, flitting around and calling as they feed.



Long-tailed Tit. Photo courtesy of Chris Wilkinson.



Greenfinch. Photo courtesy of Martin Sarre.

Greenfinch appear to be localised in Guernsey. Some garden feeders are visited regularly while they are never seen at others. Numbers seem to have stabilised although disease is still present in the island population. If you see a sick bird in your garden, stop feeding for a couple of weeks and keep those feeders clean.



Linnet. Photo courtesy of Chris Wilkinson.



Stonechat. Photo courtesy of S.W. Mahy.

A male **Linnet** in breeding plumage is a handsome bird. These days they are mainly seen around the coast from spring to autumn, but occasionally come to garden feeders.

Stonechats can be seen all around the coast and occasionally inland. They are confiding birds and, very obligingly, like to perch on top of vegetation. A female probably was close by.

These photos are a selection from the Guernsey Birds Group on Flickr. See more by following the link: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/14878858@N23/pool/with/54025498356/>

Thank you to all the photographers who use the group and allow us to use their work to promote La Société. If you would like to join the group, send me an email.

Julie Davis – Ornithology Section Secretary. Email - ornithology@societe.org.gg

Education and Conservation Team

The weather may not have been all we could have wished, but summer 2024 was a huge success for the Education Team. The season was a whirlwind of activity with up to four activities a day scheduled as we joined schools for nature walks, rockpool rambles, bird-spotting and much more, not to mention the many and varied work parties we led, ranging from raking reserves to removing invasive species to cetacean surveying.

Highlights of the summer included a visit to St Anne's School in Alderney, where we had to move about the grounds in order to prevent the pupils' enthusiasm from disturbing GCSE students who were mid-exam at the time, and being joined by Work Experience students from Elizabeth College and the Sixth Form Centre, which was as enjoyable and rewarding as ever.

Two or three years ago, our workload would lessen after the schools broke up, but nowadays we are busy throughout the summer break with holiday clubs including the Youth Commission Playscheme, CSR on nature reserves, CSR wildlife surveys and helping out at events like the West Show and the Nature Guernsey family fun day.

We hit the ground running once again at the start of the new school year, delivering a series of environmental education sessions at the Ladies' College and for the local home education hub Living Education Guernsey, as well as providing outdoor activities for schools, including rock pooling and beach cleaning.

Autumn saw the resumption of the Cultural Enrichment Programme, delivering the programme of four outdoor education lessons and craft activities to Reception pupils at Vale, St Mary & St Michael and Vauvert schools.

In October we ran a stall at Guernsey Trees for Life's inaugural tree and wood fayre at Government House, which was a terrific success. Lots of children visited us and enjoyed making flower crowns, as well as picking up seed spotter sheets, bringing us their finds and designing their own tree.

As we head into the winter months, we look forward to delivering members-only wreath-making sessions as we get closer to Christmas, as well as running sessions for schools and charities upon request.



Agilisys volunteers carrying out a marine survey at Lihou causeway.
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.



Amherst Reception pupils do some "hands-on" learning about plants.
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.



Making a flower crown at the Tree and Woodcraft Fayre.
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.

We're already thinking about next year's CSR programme and hoping to run plenty of work parties at La Marette orchard and at the Bridget Ozanne orchid fields, among other sites, so please do get in touch if your organisation or group would like to join us for these worthwhile activities; contact Becky at ecl@societe.org.gg to make all necessary arrangements.

Becky Ogier - Education and Conservation Leader

Aztec volunteers with their rakings at
Jardin de Lorette.
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.



Juniors

Our May event was a bat walk around Saumarez Park led by the Bat Section. This event was highly anticipated, and it lived up to its expectations. Our Juniors listened to a fascinating talk about the bats we have in Guernsey, where they live and how we can best look after them. Then, armed with bat detectors, we started our walk around the park to the pond where the Juniors were amazed at the bats flying over their heads feeding on the insects above the water. Thank you again to Laura Harrison, the Bat Section Secretary, for creating such a fun filled batty evening!

In June, our juniors were treated to two events, the first being a rock pooling session at Portelet Bay. We had over 50 people join us to discover our local marine life. This event also happily coincided with World Oceans Day. We had an afternoon full of fun as we gently explored the rock pools to see what we could find. The rock pools were abundant with creatures, with a special mention going to all the pregnant crabs we found. It was a lovely way to spend World Oceans Day, helping to raise public understanding and appreciation of our marine environment to our future generations.

The second event of the month was in collaboration with the Archaeology Section where our Junior members kindly helped to wash and sort some of the finds from recent archaeological digs at Castle Cornet. The Juniors sorted through many more boxes of finds than we anticipated, and they did a brilliant job of carefully cleaning the discoveries.



Some of the exciting finds washed and sorted from the archaeology digs - lots of teeth including some from a Ballan Wrasse fish. Photographs courtesy of Emma Boughey.

In July, our Juniors attended a fantastic morning learning how to survey dolphins which took place at La Vallette Bathing Pools. We were in luck and a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins played around in the bay for around an hour! There were approximately 20 individuals including a couple of juveniles which was a special sight to see. Thank you again to all who came along and our Marine Biology Section for helping to put on this event.



Bottlenose Dolphins seen at our event.
Photograph courtesy of Nicky Harris.

August brought some questionable weather, but that didn't stop our Juniors getting out and about to do a bug hunt. This took place around Lihou headland, and the event was full of enthusiastic young entomologists who found an array of insects, bugs and minibeasts! There was an abundance of butterflies, Field Grasshoppers, and Coneheads but the special highlight was the Wasp Spider pictured to the right. This is a very large, colourful spider - looking just like a common wasp keeps it safe from predators, even though it is not dangerous itself.



The Wasp Spider found on the bug hunt at Lihou headland. Photograph courtesy of Emma Boughey.

September's event was in collaboration with the Ornithology Section who led an early morning bird walk along the Shingle Bank. We used spotter sheets and binoculars to identify the feeding waders along the shoreline as the tide went out, which included Oystercatchers, Curlew, a Little Egret, and a Grey Heron. We then walked down to the La Claire Mare Nature Reserve to use the bird hide and new screen where we saw Redshank, Snipe, Shelduck, and Mallard. It was a great morning of bird watching.

In October, we again teamed up with the Ornithology Section who presented a bird ringing demonstration for our Junior members. This was held at Bordeaux Mound and the children loved seeing the wild birds up close. We had a good variety of species, but the special mention must go to the two Firecrests ringed - one male, one female. Since regular collation of monthly records, Firecrests are now known to be much more common in the Bailiwick than in the UK. Thank you again to the Ornithology Section for sharing your expertise with the younger members.



A ringed Firecrest held by Trevor Bourgaize.
Photograph courtesy of Emma Boughey.

Later in the month, the Juniors headed out on an Autumn botany and seed walk led by CBE Raymond Evison. The rain didn't deter the group who found lots of different types of seeds, fungi and some late blooming wildflowers. We also had a little competition to see who could collect the most leaves from different species of plants - 17 was the winner! Additionally, Raymond also kindly gave a demonstration of how to plant native Pink Campion seeds which the children were delighted to see. Thank you again to Raymond for your continued support of these events and sharing your wisdom with our next generation of Botanists.

We still have more Junior events planned for the final months of the year, and if you are interested in coming along, please email Sarah at eca@societe.org.gg. The details of our events are sent out to all members of La Société for whom these activities are free of charge.

Sarah Allez – Education Conservation Assistant

Upcoming Junior events for 2024:

Saturday 23rd November - Astronomy Talk and Observation, the Observatory, St Peters, 19:00 – 20:00.

Saturday 7th December - Eco-friendly Wreath Making Workshops, La Société Section Room, Candie Gardens. Workshop 1: 10:30 – 11:30 & Workshop 2: 12:30 – 13:30

Pollinator Project

BARRY WELLS AWARD FOR YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS

The Pollinator Project is announcing a new category in the Bailiwick Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition run by Guernsey Arts. This award has been made possible by generous donations made in memory of Barry Wells, co-founder of the charity, who passed away earlier this year.

Gordon Steele, Chair of the Pollinator Project, said, “Barry was passionate about pollinating insects, including bees, butterflies, moths and was also an acclaimed wildlife photographer. His images can still be seen on his website <https://barrywells.co.uk/>. Every year he went to junior and primary schools and enthused children across the Bailiwick with his love of pollinators using his slo-mo films and fantastic photography. It was a joy to go with Barry to one of these special assemblies.”

In 2023 a wall of his photographs was featured in the Wildlife Photography exhibition and went on tour to Sark and Alderney. “Rather than leave these in a cupboard we donated them to Elizabeth College where they will be displayed and available as a teaching aid. Barry would have been delighted that they were considered good enough for this” said Jayne Wells, on behalf of Barry’s family.



Barry Wells at the 2024 Wildlife
Photographer Exhibition.

Photo courtesy of Guernsey Arts.

The award of £500 and membership of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will be made annually for the next 3 years for the best photograph or short film of a pollinating insect in Guernsey taken by anyone in full or part-time education up to the age of 24. Full entry details can be found on pollinatorproject.gg or gyarts.gg

“You don’t need a macro lens or super sophisticated cameras to take great quality photos these days. Smartphones give everyone a chance of winning”, said Gordon.

“We often think of pollinators as honeybees but in Guernsey we have thousands of other species involved in this vital process. Pollinators come in all shapes and sizes, some of the most important and surprising pollinators are flies, beetles, and bugs. But very many butterflies, moths and bees also carry out this vital process which helps our flowers grow and is essential for our food.

The winner might have caught a moment on their phone, showing a butterfly on a flower, a bumblebee covered in pollen or a mason bee in a bee hotel. We look forward to seeing the entries.”

Gordon Steel – Chairperson of the Pollinator Project

Associated Groups

Name of Group	Contact	Contact Details
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Bailiwick of Guernsey Guild of Accredited Guides	Margaret Murphy	margaretmgsy@outlook.com bdsac.server@gmail.com
Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club	Delga Arnold	delga20034@yahoo.co.uk
Channel Islands Occupation Society (Guernsey)	Sue Sweet	info@friends.org.gg
Friends of the Priaulx Library	Angela Salmon	721163
Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Martin Crozier	237766
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National Trust	Tattie Thompson	239444
Plant Heritage (Guernsey Group)	Karen Hill	823222
The Alderney Society & Museum	Damian Harris	07911 721785
The Guernsey Beekeepers' Association	Cathy Morgan	07911 732912
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Michael Paul	253858
The Guernsey Society	Roy Bisson	07781 100296
The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society		

Legacies and donations in lieu of flowers

Members are reminded that it is possible to make La Société a beneficiary of their will. Money or property can be left for general use, or if desired for a specific purpose.

They are also reminded that donations in lieu of flowers can be made in memory of members who have died.

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Environment Guernsey
Environmental contracting & consulting

Environment Guernsey is the wholly owned company of La Société Guernesiaise

We provide an environmental consultancy service for a wide range of projects, including biodiversity statements, site management plans and ecological assessments. We also manage La Société's nature reserves and undertake numerous land management contracts for various States of Guernsey Departments, the National Trust and private individuals.

For all aspects of conservation advice and contracting, please contact us.

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Other Council members are: Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Jessi Jennings, Hubertus Lau, Yvonne Burford & Will Harford-Fox

Office hours:

Our office at Candie is open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am.

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