



La Société

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



David, one of the first members of the Conservation Herd. Photo courtesy of Dave Bartram.

From the Président

As I welcome you to the first Communiqué of 2024, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year.

As you know, we held an EGM in December to ask the membership for approval to increase our subscription rates and this was unanimously approved by the members who attended the meeting. It had been some years since the last increase, and Council felt that with costs having risen sharply we needed to have the new rates in place for 2024. I would like to thank you for updating your payment details and for your continued support. If you do not currently pay by Direct Debit but would like to, please inform Kate Lee, our secretary. Special mention should be made of Kate, and Janice our membership secretary, who managed to complete the process very speedily.

In December, Sarah Allez, from our education team, arranged wreath-making workshops for our junior and not-so-junior members; a total of 74 eco-friendly wreaths were made. For the adult event, held on a Friday evening, mulled wine and mince pies were provided and much enjoyed!

Sarah, whose idea it was, hopes to run more courses next year. Please keep your eyes open for more details in the October Communiqué. In addition to the LSG events Sarah was also asked to do a session for 'Parkinson's Guernsey' and Monkey Puzzle pre-school, both very successful.

We are currently working on a programme of members' events which we hope will appeal to all. Please find details under 'Upcoming Members Events' on page 3. As I mentioned in the October edition, if you have any ideas for outings etcetera then please let me know.

We use Mailchimp to keep members abreast of all that is happening and currently have a 70% viewing rate, which I am delighted to say is far better than most organisations. If you have an email address, but currently do not receive information from us via this medium, then again please inform Kate Lee and we can add you to the email list. We are aware that some people who have requested them are not receiving Mailchimp messages. In this case, it may be that your privacy settings need to be adjusted.

Many of you will be aware from a recent article in the Guernsey Press that the Guernsey Biological Records Centre currently does not have a manager, as Liz Sweet left the Centre at the end of last year to pursue new and exciting projects. We wish her well in these endeavours and thank her for the enthusiasm and knowledge which she brought to her work during the time she was with us. Her knowledge, particularly of the marine environment, was vital in the launch of many initiatives including the BEEP and DolFin projects. It is hoped by the end of April that a pan Channel Island record centre will be in place, with each island retaining its own hub. The introduction of iRecord and Indicia will mean observers will find it easier to input and access data, and fewer hours will be needed to man the GBRC. This is important as a decrease in States' funding is very likely. To ensure continued accuracy, a system will be in place that ensures all records are verified by local experts.

Visitors to Le Grand Pré Nature Reserve will have noticed that a large area of Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* has been cut back in the northwestern corner. This type of work is essential to prevent a wetland site from drying out. It was planned to send a digger in to remove some of the silt that had built up in the area, with the spoil used to level the northern path. Unfortunately, the very wet autumn and winter weather has prevented us from doing the planned work so far, but we are still hopeful that it will be completed soon.

Two more projects to look out for are the replacement of the dilapidated hide next to the parking area at Pré d'Enfer NR in Rue des Bergers, and the installation of a viewing screen at La Claire Mare NR, for which planning permission has been received.

In early November Jonathan Shanklin gave a fascinating talk on his work with the British Arctic Survey, detailing how he, together with colleagues, found the 'Ozone Hole'. He went on to explain how climate change could have a big effect on the island. I am grateful to Helen Litchfield for arranging the visit, and to Ogier (Guernsey) LLP for sponsoring the event. Whilst on island, Jonathan also spoke to sixth form students and as part of Ogier's 'Climate Awareness Month' gave a lecture to staff at their St Julian's Avenue offices.

Trevor Bourgaize, President

Dates for your diaries - Upcoming Members' Events

Egg Hunt – Sunday 24th March

Wondering what to do in the Easter holidays? Why not join us at 2pm at Vazon, meeting at the top of the slipway by Vista's car park, for an Egg Hunt with a difference! We will be searching for shark, skate and ray egg cases. This is a family-friendly event with prizes for the largest egg case found, the largest number found and the most unusual, but in addition, every child will receive an Easter egg. To ensure the Easter Bunny knows how many to cater for, please register for this event by emailing naturalhistory@societe.org.gg.

Afternoon Tea – Sunday 30th June

Join us for afternoon tea at Les Cotils. The afternoon tea will be preceded by a walk around the grounds with some of La Société's natural history experts. More information on times and prices to follow, so watch this space.

Jethou Trips (*Members only event*) – dates and times to be confirmed

We are in the process of organising our very popular annual trips to Jethou. We hope to have the usual three trips on a Saturday in May, repeated in June. At present, we are looking for suitable tide times, which need to coincide with boat availability. More information will be available soon via Mailchimp email and booking will be via Eventbrite.

Nature Guernsey Outings 2024

Nature Guernsey organises family-friendly events, aimed mainly at introducing non-members to the natural history of our island and the work La Société carries out to maintain and safeguard important habitats. Existing La Société members are of course also very welcome to attend these events.

The list of this year's confirmed events can be seen below. More may be added!

Rockpool Ramble, Saturday 9th March from 11 am to noon, Portelet Bay.

Crocks and Crabs, Sunday 7th April from 11.30 am to 12.30 Coy Bay, below Castle Cornet

Bird Ringing Day, Saturday 4th May from 7.30 am to 11, Le Grand Pré Nature Reserve.

Bug hunt, Saturday 22nd June 2.00 to 3.00 pm, Bordeaux Mound.

Bat walk, Thursday 22nd August starting at 8.15 pm, Saumarez Park

Late Summer Family Event, Sunday 1st September between 9 am and 1 pm, Pleinmont Headland.

Nature Guernsey is always looking for volunteers, so if you would be interested in helping with any of the events below, please email natureguernsey@societe.org.gg

Book Sale

We will be holding a second hand booksale on Saturday 15th June at the Russels, Les Cotils between 2 and 4pm. There will be a selection of good quality fiction and non-fiction books for sale. New and second hand local history books will remain at Candie and can be viewed during office hours.

Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP)

BEEP will be holding their first beach walkover survey at Grand Havre on Saturday 9th March from 11am. Please meet at the L'Islet kiosk. Please see pages 21 and 22 for the BEEP report.

Bat Walk Thursday 4th April at 7pm

Please join Bat Section for a guided bat walk in Saumarez Park on Thursday 4th April. Meet at the Children's Pirate Playground carpark. Find Guernsey Bats on Facebook for updates. All welcome.

AGM 2024

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Wednesday 20th March beginning at 7.30pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- (a) To hear the report of the President, Trevor Bourgaize.
- (b) To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- (c) To elect the officers and members of the Council. The post of Vice-President is vacant. Angela Salmon has come to the end of her 6 year term on Council as Ordinary member. There are three vacancies for Ordinary Members on Council. If any member wishes to propose a Vice-President or Ordinary Member for a seat on Council kindly send the candidates CV to the Secretary at Candie together with the names of the proposer and seconder by Thursday 7th March 2024.
- (d) To appoint accountants.
- (e) To consider any other matters or propositions affecting La Société. Any member who wishes to make a proposal at the AGM should submit it in writing, supported by a seconder to the Secretary to reach her by Thursday 7th March 2024.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2023 accounts will be available to all members who attend the AGM. Details of nominations for Members of Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Friday 8th March 2024.

After the AGM there will be a short break, during which refreshments will be served. There will be a short presentation after refreshments – further details to be announced.

Section Reports

Archaeology



Walls, floor and doorway being exposed at Fort Richmond magazine. Photo courtesy of Andy Lane.

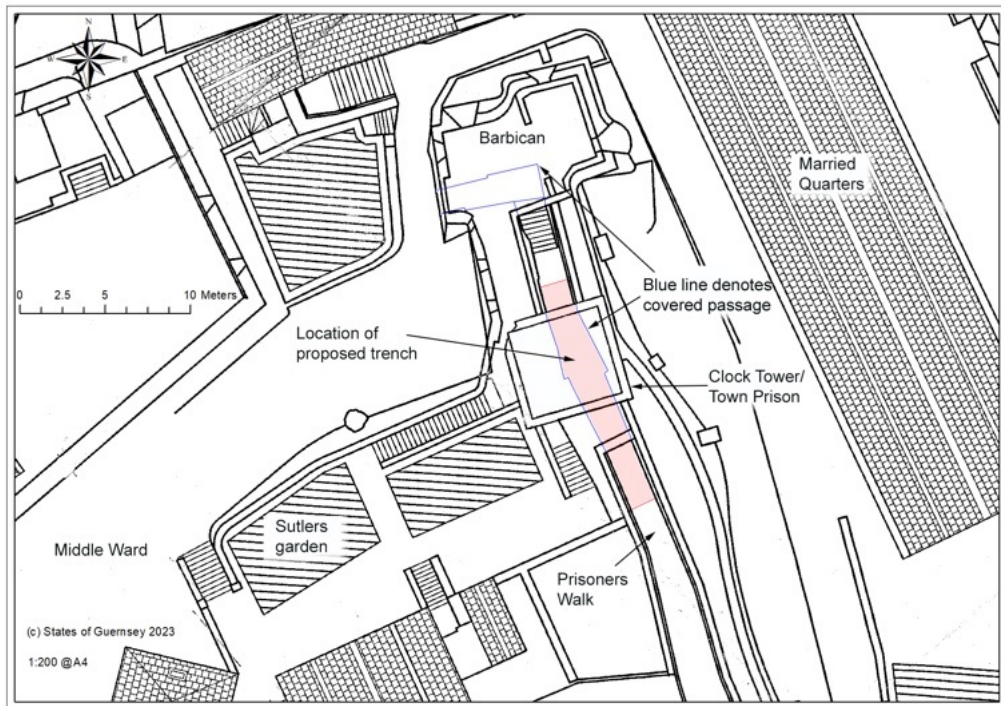
Following the Juniors incredible effort on the Fort Richmond gunpowder magazine excavation in the summer, the rest of the rubble backfill from the magazine was removed. This revealed more Victorian and later pottery, glass and tile. Within the last wheelbarrow full of rubble, a silver George V, one shilling dated 1922 was found. The excavation revealed the surviving walls and the doorway as well as a cement and lime screed floor overlying a grit and sand base layer.

The long-awaited development of Leale's Yard on the Bridge at St Sampson has reached the stage where we have been granted access to excavate a number of evaluation trenches. Our interest is in one area of the site that was not within the Braye du Val and was only partially under glass. This area is to the northeastern side of the site backing onto the Lowlands Industrial Estate. Four trenches have been set out and are now being dug, as yet we have not found any features, but we have recovered prehistoric flint and Saintonge ware (a type of French fine medieval fineware). In addition, post-medieval and numerous modern pottery and vessel glass has been found within the topsoil and subsoil. We have come down onto the natural bedrock which forms a small hougue.



View of evaluation trench at Leale's Yard. Photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey.

We have put in a planning application to excavate a stretch of Prisoner's walk within Castle Cornet due to the path eroding and being in need of repair. The trench will investigate the 14th century drawbridge pit and the foundations of the early Castle entrance. This part of the Castle has escaped any archaeological interventions, it will be exciting to see what survives. The hope is that the dig will commence before the Castle opens for the season.



Location of proposed trench in Castle Cornet. Image courtesy of Digimap and Guernsey Museum.

Archaeology Section Secretary – Andy Lane

Astronomy

Last year was a very busy time for the Astronomy Section, we held 25 members' activities and 22 outreach events, including summer holiday activities for children. This raised £1,430 towards club funds which covered maintenance of the site and equipment. Clear nights were very limited, but despite that, members have managed to observe and record some of the winter night sky. Jean Dean, Secretary

The Orion Nebula

The winter constellation of Orion the Hunter is the most striking constellation in the northern hemisphere. Visible with the naked eye, the brightest region is the Orion Nebula in the sword which lies approximately 1,300 light-years distance from Earth.

Fittingly, believed to be the cosmic fire of creation by the Maya of Mesoamerica, it is an enormous cloud of gas and dust where vast numbers of new stars are being forged. The brightest, central region is the home of four massive, young stars arranged in a trapezoidal pattern (T), unleashing their ultraviolet light, carving a cavity within the nebula and disrupting the growth of hundreds of smaller stars. Jean Dean, Secretary.



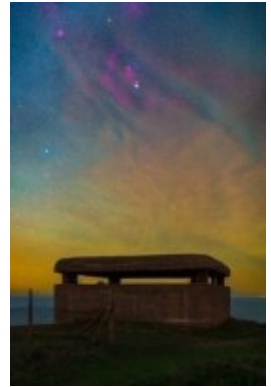
The Orion (top-centre) and Running Man (lower-left) Nebulae. The image covers an area 38 x 38 light-years, T is the Trapezium Cluster. Reds are hydrogen gas; browns are dust and blues are reflected blue/white light from young stars. Image credit: Astronomy Section members.

Airglow and the Orion Complex over the Dollman Battery

This image of the upper observation level of the Battery Dollmann command bunker at Pleinmont shows parts of the winter Milky Way, and the constellations of Orion and Monoceros with Barnard's loop, Lambda Orionis ring and many deep sky objects that make up the Orion Molecular Cloud Complex: this is one of the closest stars forming regions to Earth, as close as just 1,400 light-years away. Most of these objects are rich in hydrogen and shown in magenta in this image.

Also visible in the image is an atmospheric phenomenon known as airglow, that takes place after atoms recombine after being ionized and broken down by the sun and cosmic rays. Depending on the altitude and chemical element the airglow can take on many different colours and form many different patterns.

This image is a 3-panel panorama with a single 4-minute exposure per panel taken with a Sigma 40mm Art lens at f/2, unmodified Sony A7iii and Sky Watcher Star Adventurer. It was stitched together and edited in Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop. Jacques Loveridge, Imaging Officer.



Airglow and the Orion Complex over the Dollmann Battery at Pleinmont. Image credit: Jacques Loveridge.

Pinwheel Galaxy and supernova SN2023ixf

Messier 101, commonly called the Pinwheel Galaxy is a face on grand design spiral galaxy, located 21 million light-years away within the constellation of Ursa Major. The spiral disk is 170,000 light-years across and contains around 1 trillion stars, making it about twice the size of our Milky Way galaxy. M101 has high levels of star formation caused by gravitational interactions with neighbouring galaxies; these regions can be seen as red speckles which are rich in hydrogen, the basic element of a star.

This Image was taken using an unmodified Sony A7iii camera attached to a Sky Watcher 250PDS Newtonian reflecting telescope and an EQ6-R Pro equatorial mount. There is a total of 11 hours of 6-minute exposures for broadband data and 7 hours of 10-minute exposures using an Optolong L-enhance filter to capture hydrogen regions. All the data was acquired in May of 2023.

During the process of collecting the data over multiple nights, a bright supernova SN 2023ixf (arrow), occurred in one of the galaxy's spiral arms. This is when a massive star runs out of fuel and gravitational forces dominate, leading to the almost instantaneous collapse of the star (imagine something 1 million times the mass of Earth collapsing in just 15 seconds!). SN 2023ixf was one of the brightest supernovae visible in the last decade and was observed for several months after. Jacques Loveridge, Imaging Officer.

**Dr Jean Dean –
Astronomy Section
Secretary**



Messier 101, Pinwheel Galaxy and SN 2023ixf. Image credit: Jacques Loveridge.

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

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/>

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

Entomology

Winter is a quiet time for the Entomology Section, we are all gathering our records, turning paper into spreadsheet and identifying those things we photographed and decided to leave for another day.

If you have any casual insect or other invertebrate records for 2023 and have not already sent them in, please send to entomology@societe.org.gg as soon as possible.

Some moth trapping in October following the storms showed migrant species had been blown in from the continent, my own trap containing no less than 58 White Speck along with Turnip, White Point, Delicate and Vestal.

I am always into a bit of "Urban mothing" when walking around town on my lunch break, one day after work I spotted a moth of the shiny black wall of Royal Chambers in St Julian's Avenue, which turned out to be a Golden Twin-spot, a rarer migrant which we have seen more records of this year than usual. Remember to always keep your eyes open even in unlikely places.



**Andy Marquis –
Entomology Section
Secretary**

Golden Twin-spot
(*Chrysodeixis chaleites*).
Photo courtesy of Andy Marquis.

Family History

Family History and La Société Guernesiaise are looking for new premises. At the moment we are based at the Russels at Les Cotils but the building is starting to fall into disrepair. So we are asking if there are any members that know of any buildings that would be suitable for us to rent/purchase at a reasonable amount as funds are tight. The building will need to house family history as a research room with openings every 1st and 3rd Saturday each month between 10am and noon with members coming to do their research. It will also need storage space for books, tools and other items which are needed by other sections. If you do know of anything, could you please email Maria van der Tang on researchenquiries.co.uk or give me a ring on 248538.

Maria van der Tang - Section Secretary to Family History.

Events

Saturday 23rd March 10am, Frossard Theatre, Candie an illustrated talk entitled “Guernsey Women Went to War Too” by Liz Walton

Saturday 25th May 10am, Frossard Theatre, Candie an illustrated talk entitled “The Destruction of La Rocque qui Sonne and the Fate of its Destroyer: a tale of misfortune in the 18th Century” by Richard Hocart

Wednesday 26th June 10am, a visit to Ford Richmond (*FHS members only*)

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

Events - all talks are held in the Frossard Theatre, Candie and start at 7.30pm.

Saturday 9th March – A re-run of our retrospective look at last year’s Poitou trip, for the benefit of those who were unable to enjoy it previously. This will make a very suitable prelude to the following talk.

Saturday 23rd March – A talk entitled “Why have we been looking hard at church fabric? Examining features of early Christianity both north and south of us, providing a context for thoughts about sacred sites locally in early medieval times” by John McCormack.

Saturday 13th April – A talk entitled “Hearth and Home - A Comparison of Early Integrated Houses in the Channel Islands” by – Callum Tostevin-Hall, based on a talk given in 2023 to the Vernacular Architecture Group in Leicester.

Saturday 27th April – A talk entitled “What do we know about La Tour Beaugard, from the 14th-century onwards?” – by Callum Tostevin-Hall.

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.

Ornithology

Autumn / Winter 2023

Photographic Competition



The winner of the Section's inaugural photographic competition was Kim Wilkinson with his excellent shot of a Turnstone. He received a canvas print. The competition was open and all the entries can be viewed on the Section's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-gelEITMw0&t=25s>. Thank you to everyone who entered.

Interesting Sightings

(Reported sightings contained in these notes have yet to be checked for accuracy and are not yet authenticated records)

Black-throated Diver (Uncommon) at La Vallette on 17th November (JF/VF).

Red-necked Grebe (Scarce) at Cobo 19th October (MPL).

Slavonian Grebe (Uncommon) at Fort Grey on 6th December (VF/AS).

Cory's Shearwater (Very rare) 7 at Creve Coeur on 25th October (MAG).

Sooty Shearwater (Uncommon) 5 on a sea watch at Jaonneuse on 14th October (WRT et al).

Balearic Shearwater (Quite common) 26 at Creve Coeur on 25th October (MAG).

Leach's Petrel (Vagrant) 4 on 2nd November on a sea watch at Jaonneuse (VF).

Cattle Egret (Scarce) 26 at the Reservoir on 9th October (WRT).

Great White Egret (*Scarce*) over Le Grand Pré on 2nd October (TJB/JD). Probably the same bird was also seen at Talbot Valley and at Pleinmont on the same date.

Canada Goose (*Uncommon*) 6 at the Colin Best Nature Reserve (MAG, WRT).

Brent Goose (*Quite common*) 6 at Les Amarreurs on 22nd October (JD). These were the first birds returning from the Arctic tundra to spend the winter along or shores.

Brent Goose (*light-bellied*) 4 at the Shingle Bank on 20th November (MAG). This subspecies is much scarcer than the usual Brent Goose.

Common Scoter (*Uncommon*) 5 on 14th October on a sea watch at Jaonneuse (VF et al).

Goldeneye (*Vagrant – last record 2011*) at Grand Havre (JH). This bird was handed in to the GSPCA as it was sick and later died. A second bird was seen at the Vingtaine de l'Epine on 24th November (AJB).

Red-breasted Merganser (*Uncommon*) at the Shingle Bank on 23rd October (MAG).

Pallid Harrier (*Vagrant – 3rd island record*) at Pleinmont on 17th October (JH, DS and WRT.)



Pallid Harrier. Photo by Dave Carré.

Merlin (*Uncommon*) at Jaonneuse on 14th October seen coming in off the sea (KC et al).

Knot (*Scarce*) at Rocquaine on 17th November (WRT).

Purple Sandpiper (*Scarce*) seen flying out to reef from the Chouet hide. (JH). The first recorded sighting of the autumn.

Jack Snipe (*Uncommon*) at La Claire Mare on 14th December (JH/DS)



Jack Snipe. Photo by Andy Stodling.

Grey Phalarope (*Scarce*) at Jaonneuse on 4th November (VF/AM).

Arctic Skua (*Uncommon*) 3 offshore from the Chouet hide on 25th October (MAG).

Great Skua (*Uncommon*) 5 offshore from Jaonneuse on 14th October (VF).

Common Gull (*Scarce*) 3 at Perelle on 23rd October (WRT), all in first winter plumage.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Scarce*) 4 at Perelle on 7th October (WRT), 3 adults and a third calendar year bird.

Glaucous Gull (*Very rare*) at Fort Grey on 26th December (MPL).

Barn Owl (*Uncommon*) 2 at Pleinmont on 31st October, (JF/VF).

Kingfisher (*Uncommon*) at Fort Le Crocq on 25th October (DJC).

Woodlark (*Scarce*) at La Vallette on 12th October heading out south with Swallows and Siskin.

Swallow (*Common*) at Pleinmont on 27th November (MAG). Last reported date.

Richard's Pipit (*Scarce*) near Fort Hommet on 30th October (MPL).

Water Pipit (Scarce) at the Shingle Bank on 3rd November (MAG)



Water Pipit. Photo by Barry Wells.

Wheatear (Common) at Perelle on 20th November (MAG). Last reported date.

Ring Ouzel (Uncommon) at Mont Herault on 19th October and at Rue des Hougues, St Andrew on 23rd October (MAG).

Fieldfare (Quite common) 22 on 16th at Pleinmont heralded the return of these winter visitors, ahead of around 250 which were seen the following day (WRT).

Redwing (Common) 7 over Le Grand Pré on 12th October was the earliest reported date (TJB/JD).

Mistle Thrush (Scarce) at Pleinmont on 16th October, in with Fieldfare and Redwing (WRT).

Yellow-browed Warbler (Scarce) 5 at Pezeries on 19th October (MAG). This is quite an astonishing record as they are usually sighted in ones or twos.

Rook (Scarce) at Rue des Hougues, St Andrew on 20th December (JH).

Rose-coloured Starling (Scarce) at Vazon on 4th October (JH).

Brambling (Uncommon) in off the sea with Chaffinches on 16th October (JH/DS).

Common Crossbill (Scarce) 5 at Pleinmont on 8th October (WRT/MAG).

Snow Bunting (Scarce) at Fort Hommet on 6th October (DJC).

List of observers

AJB	Tony Bisson
TJB	Trevor Bourgaize
DJC	Dave Carré
KC	Kevin Childs
JD	Julie Davis
JF	Jenny Froome
VF	Vic Froome
MAG	Mark Guppy
JH	Jamie Hooper
MPL	Mark Lawlor
AM	Andy Marquis
AS	Andy Stoealing
DS	Dave Spicer
WRT	Wayne Turner



Long-tailed Tit. Photo by Mike Cunningham.

Forthcoming Events

Thursday 7th March 7.30 pm. Indoor meeting at Candie

Section and LSG members only.

A short AGM will be followed by a Zoom meeting presentation, 'Birds and How They Live' given by Keith Betton, Chair of the Hampshire Ornithological Society.

Tuesday 12th March 9.30 am. Reservoir. 2 hours

Open to all.

Meet on the dam so parking is available at either end, for a walk around part of the Millennium Walk looking for water and woodland birds. Parts of the path are steep and uneven.

Thursday 4th April 7.30 pm Indoor meeting at Candie

Section members only.

Agenda and Minutes.

Saturday 6th April 9.30 am. Pleinmont. 2 hours

Open to all.

Meet at The Scramble Track car park. We will be looking for migrants as well as resident birds. Some paths are steep and uneven.

Tuesday 30th April 8.30 am. (time tbc) Day trip to Herm

Initially for Section members only.

There will be a lot of walking (at birdwatchers' pace!) and some paths are steep and uneven. We will be looking for hirundines, puffins, migrant and resident birds. Please bring a packed lunch.

Julie Davis – Section Secretary

Education and Conservation Team

The Education Team have enjoyed a productive winter! Over recent months we have worked in a wide range of education settings, from Monkey Puzzle pre-school to the College of Further Education. The winter term was particularly busy as we attended four different schools each week to deliver Outdoor Education sessions; Vale, St Mary & St Michael, La Houquette and Amherst all received our contribution to the Cultural Enrichment Programme, while we continued to lead other activities at schools, including presentations on local landscapes and, as Christmas drew near, wreath-making workshops, including some sessions especially adapted for younger participants!

On the subject of wreath-making, it was great fun to lead a members-only workshop in December and we will certainly be offering this popular activity again this year, as well as participating in the various members' events planned for 2024.



*La Société members making their Christmas wreaths fortified by mince pies and mulled wine!
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.*

The New Year saw us giving Outdoor Education lessons at Les Hautes Capelles and Castel primary schools before moving on to La Mare de Carteret and Notre Dame in February, as well as leading ornithological activities at Acorn House to mark the Big School Birdwatch!

This spring we will be working with the team at Edible Guernsey to organise a Learning Area at their St Peters site, where we hope to hold low-cost activities during school holidays, with priority given to La Société members. We believe that this is a great way to offer our family members a very real benefit and hope to be able to set some dates later this year.

Happily, we have once again received applications from Elizabeth College and Sixth Form Centre students to carry out work experience with us this summer, which we very much look forward to as we enjoyed our time with last year's cohort so much.

Our CSR programme received a boost as Carey partnered with us for a year of activities, which began with maintenance at the Vale Pond and a beach clean around the Grande Havre area. We also continue our programme with Investec, who have now begun the final full year of sponsoring La Société as their chosen charity. We are currently planning our calendar of CSR events for the year and are delighted to see our diary filling up quickly for 2024 – do get in touch with us if your company, school or youth group would like to take part in any of the activities we offer as we are keen to make the very most of the warmer months. Contact Becky at ecl@societe.org.gg

Becky Ogier – Education and Conservation Leader



*Making birdfeeders as part of an education session.
Photo courtesy of Becky Ogier.*

Juniors

In October 2023 we held two Junior events. Our first event was a very well attended bird ringing demonstration. In the unseasonably glorious sunshine, our Juniors were lucky enough to enjoy a morning of bird ringing, demonstrated by our President Trevor Bourgaize at Le Grand Pré Nature Reserve. We had a brilliant time with a very engaged group who were captivated seeing wild birds up close as they were measured, weighed and ringed. Throughout the morning 9 birds were caught, with a special highlight of a Goldcrest. (We also had a great time looking at the moths which had been caught overnight.) Thank you again to Trevor and his trainees for taking the time to demonstrate this fascinating practice to our Juniors, and fingers crossed events such as this will inspire the next generation of bird ringers!



*A Blue Tit which was rung at the bird ringing event and being shown to our Juniors. (Bird ringing undertaken under licence).
Photo courtesy of Emma Boughey.*

Our second event in October took place on a windy and stormy day, however we were reluctant to cancel as this was our already rescheduled (and highly demanded) rock pooling event. This event took place at Belle Grève Bay and even the weather couldn't put us off! On the low tide we found an array of crabs, fish and all sorts of other marine creatures with the highlight being a Decorator Spider crab which was very well camouflaged as a piece of seaweed.



*A Decorator Spider Crab found at our rock pooling event.
Photo courtesy of Emma Boughey.*

November's event was in collaboration with the Archaeology Section and our Juniors were once again invited to book in for an exclusive tour of the Guernsey Museum stores. This event is always a favourite amongst our Juniors and spaces filled up very quickly. The tours comprise of all sorts of unique and interesting collections, including archaeology finds, natural history and artefacts from Guernsey and around the world.

Our final event of 2023 was our eco-friendly wreath making workshops which kicked off at the start of the festive season! Due to popular demand we increased the number of workshops held this year, all of which were fully booked. A huge thank you goes to all of our members (and non-members) who come along and support this event every year. As always, the wreaths all looked beautiful having been made solely out of local foliage and decorated with all natural materials.



Some of the beautiful wreaths created at our wreath workshops held in December. Photo courtesy of Emma Boughey.

In 2023, the Education team held 12 Junior events covering a wide variety of topics, and in total we had 148 junior attendees. We'd like to again take this opportunity to thank the Section Secretaries and members for volunteering their time to help us organise these brilliant events which engage children with our natural environment, as well as our members who attend and support these events.

We are looking forward to hosting more Juniors events in 2024 and hope to see some of you there! If you are interested in joining the mailing list or would like to hear more about our junior events, 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 will be finalised in the next few weeks. The details of these events will be sent out to all members of La Société for whom these activities are free of charge and will also be posted on our website.

Projects

Bailiwick DolFin Project

While the wet and windy winter months have limited opportunities to go out for shore and boat monitoring, it has provided time to look through all the sightings for 2023 and plan the following year. We plan on publishing a list of planned public watch events for 2024 soon and would love for anyone who is interested to join and help with spotting efforts.

For those who are interested about the project, our webpage on the Societe website is finally live and can be viewed at <https://societe.org.gg/wp/dolfin/>.

A quick summary of cetacean sightings by species for 2023 can be found below. While Bottlenose dolphins composed the majority of sightings reported, it was certainly a year for variety, with several sightings of whales including humpback whale and fin whale! Further unpacking of the 2023 data will be available in due course through the webpage once more analysis has been conducted.

Species	Sightings
Bottlenose dolphin	43
Common dolphin	17
Rissos dolphin	17
Harbour porpoise	3
Humpback whale	2
Fin whale	1
Pilot whale	1
Unknown dolphin	4
Unknown cetacean	4
Total	92

Thank you to everyone who submitted sightings to us, either through our Social media groups, or email (DolFin@Societe.org.gg). We all look forward to another year full of trying (and hopefully succeeding) in spotting these amazing creatures!

Nicky Harris – DolFin Project Co-ordinator

Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project

From late autumn (2023) onwards, there has been a flurry of activity for the Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP) partners, core volunteers and citizen scientists. The low spring tides helped increase eelgrass sightings, recorded across the Bailiwick by members of the public. For example, these sightings further verified the presence of eelgrass at Pembroke Bay, which was originally recorded by a hard-core sea-swimmer for the first time earlier this year. Whilst trying to dodge the wintery rains, BEEP's partners (La Société Guernesaise, Alderney Wildlife Trust, Biodiversity Partnership, Guernsey Biological Records Centre and Seasearch) and key stakeholders spent some time inside planning BEEP's future aspirations: how to record the key features of this important marine habitat and how better to engage with the public.



Blue Dolphins Sub Aqua Club completing eelgrass surveys. Photo courtesy of BEEP.

During November, Clare Craker (BEEP's Guernsey based coordinator) presented at the first UK Seagrass Symposium, showcasing BEEP to a range of eelgrass scientists, academics and conservationists. We even managed to squeeze in a presentation to the Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club, to thank them for all their voluntary eelgrass dive survey efforts. The club have spent a large part of their diving activities monitoring the ecological impacts of traditional moorings upon eelgrass beds across Guernsey and Herm.



BEEP attending UK Seagrass Symposium. Photo courtesy of BEEP.



Testing beach walkover surveys. Photo courtesy of BEEP.

Currently, we are tweaking our beach walkover survey methods and adding more talks, surveys and events for 2024. Keep your eyes peeled for our first event of the year; a wonderful beach walk of Grand Harve in March (date/time to be confirmed). For further details related to BEEP please contact Dr Mel Broadhurst-Allen at marine@alderneywildlife.org. And finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone/anyone who has voluntarily submitted their eelgrass records, joined a survey or just stopped to say hello during an event in 2023, your on-going support is certainly helping us understand our Bailiwick Eelgrass!

Mel Broadhurst - Allen - Living Seas Coordinator, Alderney Wildlife Trust

Associated Groups

Name of Group	Contact	Contact Details
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Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Steve Byrne	257261
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Plant Heritage (Guernsey Group)	Karen Hill	823222
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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.

Guernsey Environmental Services Limited,
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Environment Guernsey
Environmental contracting & consulting

Environment Guernsey is the wholly owned company of La Société Guernesiaise

We manage La Société's nature reserves and undertake numerous land management contracts for various States of Guernsey Departments, the National Trust and private individuals. We also run the Guernsey Biological Records Centre and provide an environmental consultancy service.

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

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