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La Société Guernesiaise Newsletter



La Société COMMUNIQUÉ

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



Partial Solar Eclipse cover photo by Jacques Loveridge



From the Président

In the February Communiqué, I stated that that article would be my last as President; how wrong I was! In the absence of anyone coming forward to take on the role, I agreed to do one more year rather than see the position left vacant. The inability to fill positions like these is not unique to our organisation and is becoming increasingly common amongst charities. Many people believe that they lack sufficient knowledge to hold the position of President. However, everybody brings something different to the role, and our Past Presidents have had their particular interests and areas of expertise. La Société covers such a vast

range of subjects, it would be asking a lot for one person to be knowledgeable in them all, but you can be pretty sure somebody in La Société would be able to answer any queries!

We held our Annual General Meeting on March 24th, and I am pleased to report that, for the first time in years, elections were required for the posts of Vice President and three Ordinary Members of the Council. Felicity Quevatre-Malcic was voted in as Vice President, and the new Ordinary Members are Rob Roue, Elaine Mahy, and Angela Salmon, the last named being re-elected, having served on Council previously. We wish them well in their new roles.

It was intended to follow the AGM with a talk by Jessie Jennings, CEO of the Nature Commission, on recording wildlife using apps such as iRecord and iNaturalist. However, a packed agenda, including discussion on some changes to the Rules, meant insufficient time was available, so Jessie kindly agreed to give her presentation at a later date, and this took place on April 17th. Having shown us a number of different apps explaining step by step how to add records, Jessie answered questions on recording in general – a very interesting presentation. My thanks go to Jessie for rescheduling her talk.

I mentioned the Mountain Biking trial in the February Communiqué. The trial ended on March 31st, and interested parties were asked to submit any comments they might have; we have done this and hope a meeting can be arranged with the Committee for Environment and Infrastructure. The Guernsey Rally had also caused the Ornithology Section some concerns about disturbance to two species of breeding owls, but I am pleased to say it seems to have been completed with minimal disruption.

In the week commencing May 12th, many of our Natural History Sections helped the Nature Commission at the annual Bioblitz, aimed at primary age children.

This year's event was at L'Ancrese East, with one day for the experts to record their finds, and two days to show the children the flora and fauna to be found in the area. This is the second time the Bioblitz has been held here, and it will be interesting to compare the two sets of results, once all the records are in.

The National Trust of Guernsey's Viera Marchi is on the 7th of July, and as usual, we will have a stand. Sarah Allez, Pierre Ehmann, and Felicity Quevatre-Malcic have met to discuss ideas and are hoping to include activities that encourage children's participation. We will also be at the West Show on August 13th and 14th. Although the display has yet to be finalised, we will be showcasing our Reserves and highlighting the benefits of membership.

Whilst on the subject of Reserves, I can report that we have completed the purchase of a new field between Mont Hérault and the Scramble Track. Our first task was to place boulders at the western end to prevent vehicles from driving through it. We will now survey the area to record the flora and fauna, which will help us to form a management plan.

More dredging work has been carried out at Le Grand Pre. We are trying to achieve standing water to encourage Dragonflies and Damselflies, and the early indications are positive, with a good number of sightings in April and May, including the Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*. There has been a marked decline in Odonata species locally over the last 20 years due to habitat loss, pollution, and habitat neglect.

Several species have been lost, but they could recolonise quite quickly, if the right conditions are provided. If you are out for a walk and manage to photograph any Dragon or Damselflies, then please send your photographs to [**president@societe.org.gg**](mailto:president@societe.org.gg)

Guernsey goes to the polls on June 18th. Many important issues face the island, but if you speak to candidates or attend the hustings, please canvass their views on environmental matters. The majority of politicians rarely mention environment issues, or if they do, comments are very general, with seemingly few ideas on, or interest in, how we care for it and balance the competing demands for land usage. Do they understand the issues facing our flora and fauna? Are they aware of the loss of biodiversity? Will they support habitat creation and regeneration, and ensure that SoG-owned land is appropriately managed? Are they prepared to support the charities that do so much for the

environment? Do they realise how much the environment can add to the island's tourism sector? (Our famous orchid meadows are a case in point, with people timing their holidays to coincide with this floral extravaganza.) Have they forgotten already how important being able to spend time in the natural environment was for us all during the Covid pandemic? I shall personally be reading all the candidates' manifestos with interest.

I would like to end this report by welcoming Leah Cottell as the new Zoology Section Secretary. My thanks go to Andy Marquis, who has been wearing two hats for a while, but will now be able to concentrate on Entomology.

Trevor Bourgaize
President
La Société Guernesaise

From the Vice Président

I'm delighted to have been elected Vice President of La Société at the very well attended Annual General Meeting in March, and I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I first became a member of la Societe forty years ago, after meeting the late Marie de Garis, when she published a new edition of her dictionary of Guernesaise. I was a novice reporter for Radio Guernsey at the time, and she was an awe-inspiring intellect, and a very memorable character! Because of that meeting, I joined the Société, and though I then worked in broadcasting in London for a number of years, the annual transactions kept me in touch with the Société's activities. Later, back in Guernsey again, the Scaly Crickets brought me back into close contact with the Société: Professor Karim Vahed, who visited with his family for the research project, stayed next door to us, and impressed us with the extraordinary resilience of this threatened and valuable species.

I believe strongly in the ethos of the Société, and also, perhaps because of the years I have spent in windowless newsrooms and courtrooms, I love being outside, whether swimming or cliff walking, or just observing the sea, the

sky, and what is swimming, flying, growing, and creeping. When I was growing up I hoped to follow my farmer uncle and keep cows — I actually became a teacher, then a journalist, and, since 2020, a Jurat; however, we still live in my late uncle's house, built by my great grandfather who was a grower, and the fields around our house are still grazed by livestock, including the conservation herd who visited us a year or two back. My architect husband and I are enthusiastic members of the Historic Buildings Section, and over the coming months I look forward to becoming acquainted with all of the Société's sections, projects, and Studies.

I believe that, as custodians of our natural and cultural heritage, it is our responsibility to study it, discuss it, teach about it and protect it for future generations; and to respond to twenty-first century concerns, whilst maintaining valued traditional activities and disciplines. It is a privilege and a pleasure to collaborate with and support those whose vision and commitment has driven the Société forward to its prominence today.

Felicity Quevâtre-Malcic
Vice President
La Société Guernesaise



Pip Gallagher awarded the Science & Nature Grant 2025

My name is Pip Gallagher, and I have been very fortunate to receive La Société's Science and Nature Grant for 2025, which will support my final year studying Marine Biology at the University of Plymouth.

In September I will begin research for my dissertation focused on the study of a non-native Mediterranean species of kelp, *Laminaria ochroleuca*, which is common in the Channel since expanding its range northwards. In light of the recent Oceans documentary narrated by

Sir David Attenborough, the extent to which kelp absorbs carbon from our atmosphere is, surprisingly, only starting to be understood - the documentary reports kelp to be a more efficient carbon sequestrator than rainforests or seagrass beds.

My research in September will be focused on the transport of carbon locked in the kelp itself, or biomass, and the rate at which broken fragments of kelp decay. I will be assessing the impacts of fouling by bryozoan animals, as well as factors such as light and heatwave-simulated temperatures. Understanding how this carbon-rich biomass is locked away in the ocean will be key to more reliably quantifying how much kelp forests contribute to Blue Carbon stores. Whilst my research will be based in Plymouth, the findings will be very relevant to Guernsey.

I hope that my findings, to be presented next summer, may spark more interest in Guernsey's kelp forests, raise awareness of their services to us, and potentially promote research and mapping of them around the Bailiwick. I am very grateful to accept this bursary, and I hope to continue marine research at Master's level.

Pip Gallagher
University of Plymouth

Education Team

What beautiful weather we have enjoyed over recent months – it really was a pleasure to take our outdoor education activities to schools throughout the island and beyond! We were delighted to be asked to lead activities for Hautes Capelles, Castel, La Mare de Carteret, Notre Dame, La Houquette, Amherst, St Martin's, Forest, St Mary & St Michael, Vale, Le Rondin, Vauvert, Les Beaucamps, Blanchelande College, Ladies' College and Elizabeth College, as well as St Anne's School in Alderney. We reached students of all ages as our spring/summer offerings ranged from nature-themed crafts at preschools like Monkey Puzzle and Preschool Duval to field trips with adult students from the Guernsey Institute.

We also enjoyed participating in other agencies' events during springtime, including the inaugural Bloom Festival at Fairfield and Guernsey Museums' History Fest, and were delighted to support BioBlitz 2025, organised by the Nature Commission.

We are thrilled to confirm that the Education Team will continue to deliver outdoor education sessions as part of the States of Guernsey's Cultural Enrichment Programme, and that the 2025-2026 school year will bring new opportunities as we run follow-up activities for pupils who attended the sessions during their Reception year.

As always, our CSR programme reaches its busiest season during the summer as we carry out maintenance on nature reserves such as Silbe, Pre d'Enfer and the Vale Pond as well as the beautiful Bridget Ozanne orchid fields at Les Vicheries and our orchards, La Marette and Jardin de Lorette, with the help of our corporate volunteers, to whom we are hugely grateful!

Our work has not been limited to schools and businesses during recent months – we once again collaborated with the Youth Commission on Playscheme events during the school holidays, held outdoor learning sessions for the local home education network Living Education Guernsey and organised activities (beach cleans, bug hunts and more) with various youth groups including Scouts, Squirrels and Rainbows.

We are hoping to fit in some members' events around our packed schedule during the coming months and welcome suggestions of possible activities – contact Becky at ecl@societe.org.gg

Do look out for us at Le Viaer Marchi and the West Show over the summer – come and say hello!

Becky Ogier
Education and Conservation Leader
La Société Guernesaise

Nature Guernsey

We have already completed three of the six events planned under the Nature Guernsey banner for 2025. The first of these was a search for 'Crabs and Cocks' on a lovely, albeit a little windy, day in March. This event was held on Cow Bay below the Castle Emplacement and was run jointly with the Archaeology and Marine Biology Sections.

We had a fantastic turn out and it was great to see more than 100 people of all ages roaming the beach! We found some fascinating archaeological treasures including prehistoric flint, and as usual a brilliant array of marine species. At least six different species of crab were found and identified by our volunteers, with the vast majority being Furrowed crab, various species of anemone, Brittle and Cushion Stars, lots of Common Grey Sea Slugs (and their eggs), but the two highlights of the event had to be a Spiny Starfish and Bobtail Squid.

The second event of the year was a new one in the Nature Guernsey calendar where the team joined Bonita Events at the Bloom Easter Festival held at Fairfield. We were lucky enough to be part of the main trail meaning the children attending had to come and make a bird feeder with us to get their stamp to complete the route. The bird feeders were made out of recycled materials or fallen pinecones. The activity went down a treat and on this day over 200 bird feeders were made to support our local birds.

Our third event took place in April and

was the ever-popular Rock Pool Ramble, including this year, an Eelgrass Survey. This year the event was held at Belle Greve bay where there is an incredible expanse of marine wildlife. We were very lucky with the weather, and we had approximately 40 people join us in the sunshine.



Spiny Starfish found at Cow Bay, **Emma Boughey**



Common Grey Sea Slug at Cow Bay, **Emma Boughey**

This low spring tide didn't disappoint, and we were treated to a wide array of biodiversity including some (quite large!) lobsters, spider crabs, many a squat lobster, sea hares, ormers and some pregnant crabs very carefully handled and put back as soon as possible. We also undertook an eelgrass survey in collaboration with The Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP) which looked at the health of this seagrass bed.

Thank you again to all the exceptional volunteers who give us their time to help put on these events as well as all of you who come along and support us. We hope to see more of you at the Nature Guernsey events below!

Sarah Allez, Chairperson, Nature Guernsey



One of the lobsters found at the Rock pool Ramble, **Emma Boughey**



A pregnant Montagu's crab found at Belle Greve Bay, **Emma Boughey**

Upcoming Nature Guernsey Events:

Nature Guernsey organises free 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.

This year's events can be seen below, more may be added!

Bug Hunt - Saturday 21st June – Starting at 2pm until 3pm, at Lihou headland.

Late Summer Family Event – Sunday 7th September - between 9am and 1pm (Exact timings TBC), at Pleinmont Headland. A day of guided walks, bug hunts, moth trapping, games and craft activities.

Bird Watching Day – Saturday 11th October – drop in between 8am and 5pm, at La Claire Mare Nature Reserve. A day of bird watching where we identify as many bird species as possible – come along and be a part of the fun!

Archaeology

At the time of writing we are at Les Huguettes in Alderney, following up on the discovery of part of an Early Iron Age wall made right at the end of last year's excavation. This has turned out to be a semi-circular wall, about half a metre high, which may once have supported a timber structure. We consider the building may have been a workshop of some sort, perhaps for a specific industrial process such as pottery manufacture.

A very similar structure, right next to this one, was excavated in the 1970's and there is a display of the finds in Alderney Museum. A large amount of pottery in a wide variety of forms was found in this earlier excavation. At a date to be arranged there will be a talk on this latest season of work at Les Huguettes; however you can also find a series of short videos on the You Tube site 'Guernsey Archaeology' <https://www.youtube.com/@guernseyarchaeology7446>

Earlier this year we were involved in an excavation at St Andrew's Church. There are plans to build a porch and toilet on the west end and in advance of this development we dug the footings to enable any archaeology to be recorded. The earliest parts of this church are 11th-12th century; however the west gable and door are thought to be of 15th century date, probably having been rebuilt when the tower was constructed.

Our excavation went to a depth of around 1.2 metres and revealed footings for an earlier west wall, these are about half a metre forward of the existing ones. This wall could only be the remains of an earlier nave and one slightly longer than that which exists today. A lot of modern service pipes ran through our trench and these had mostly disturbed any burials in the area, however right at the bottom we encountered an in situ burial. Since this ran underneath the footings of the earlier nave, it must date to a very early phase of the church. We will be able to radiocarbon date a sample of the bone and it will be very interesting to see the resulting date. Later this year we will return to this site to dig a second trench for the cesspit.

In June we will be investigating a field on Le Crocq headland. Lukis excavated a mound here in 1857, unearthing a ruined stone structure and finding pottery and flint tools. An urn containing bone had been found nearby on an earlier occasion. It is likely that the mound was a dolmen or cist, perhaps of Bronze Age date. One or two of Lukis' finds are in the museum collection, but it is not known what became of the monument itself and it was quite possibly reburied. Hopefully we will be able to relocate it.

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

Tanya Walls
Archaeology Section Secretary



The 2025 excavation at Les Huguettes, courtesy of Philip de Jersey



'Remains of destroyed cist at Le Crocq near Richmond', from the Lukis Collection, courtesy of Guernsey Museum

Astronomy

The Spider and Fly

Within the constellation of Auriga sit objects IC417, NGC1931, IC410 and NGC1893 surrounded by a mix of various gasses, including hydrogen-alpha, ionized sulfur, doubly-ionized oxygen and dust.

The emission nebula IC417, often called the Spider Nebula, is an area rich in star formation about 10,000 light years

distance from Earth. NGC1931, often called the Fly Nebula, is a reflection and emission nebula formed around a young star cluster of about 2 million years in age and 7,500 light years distance. IC410 is an HII (ionized hydrogen) region about 12,400 light years distance and is associated with a young open star cluster, NGC 1893, that is ionizing the gasses in the region. Also visible is NGC1907, which is an open star cluster of about 30 stars which are 500 million years old and 4,500 light years distance.

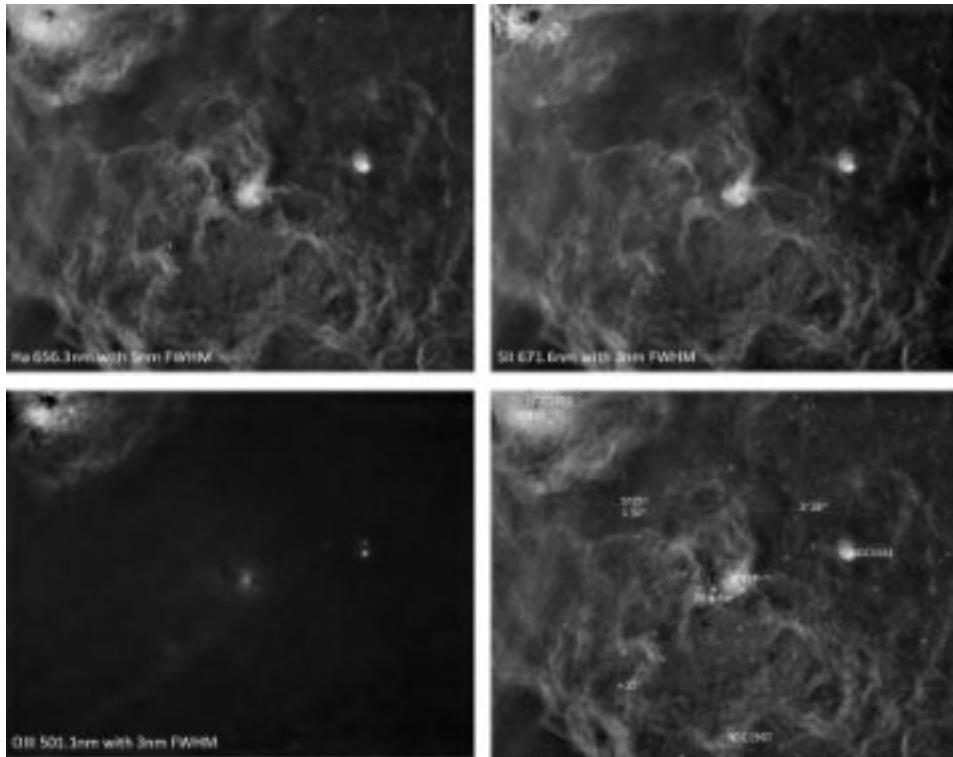


Figure 1
NGC1931, IC410 and IC417 shown in Ha, SII and OIII. FOV is 2 x 1.6°.
Image credit Jean Dean.



Figure 2
Photosphere solar eclipse sequence. Image credit Carol Vivyan.

Partial Solar Eclipse

On 29 March 2025, the David Le Conte Astronomical Observatory was open to the public to view a partial solar eclipse. During a solar eclipse, the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, casting a shadow on the Earth that either fully or partially blocks the Sun's light in a swathe across the Earth. The eclipse started at 10.01 and ended at 10.57, with the maximum occurring at 10.57 when 31% of the Sun was obscured.



Figure 3
Sun's Chromosphere showing the maximum hase of 31%. Image credit Jacques Loveridge.

Partial Lunar Eclipse

On 14 March 2025, there was a partial lunar eclipse, visible towards the west when the Moon was setting. During a lunar eclipse, the Earth blocks sunlight from reaching the Moon, creating a shadow on the lunar surface. The eclipse started at 05.09 and it reached its maximum visible magnitude at 06:20, while just above the horizon at 1.4° altitude.

Ancient people would almost certainly have recognised that there was some recurring pattern to the frequency of lunar eclipses, as an observer remaining in the same location will see about 19 or 20 such eclipses in an 18-year period. However, as they lacked an understanding of planetary mechanics, they used various myths to explain the event.

The Inca feared it was a jaguar attacking the Moon, which turned it blood-red. They feared after the attack, the jaguar would crash to Earth to consume people, so they would try to drive the predator away by shaking spears at the Moon and making lots of noise. Ancient Mesopotamians viewed the lunar eclipse as an assault on their king by seven demons. However, as they were able to reasonably predict the eclipses, they would install a temporary, surrogate king to bear the brunt of any attack, and the real king would masquerade as an ordinary citizen. Presumably, since the

Moon returned to normal and no harm befell people, then such measures were deemed successful, perhaps apart from the surrogate king, who legend says, disappeared never to be seen again!

Not all cultures view eclipses as a bad thing. For example, the Batammaliba people of Togo and Benin in Africa view the event as the Sun and Moon fighting and the people encourage them to stop. They see it as a time of coming together and resolving old feuds and anger. It is a myth that has held to this day.

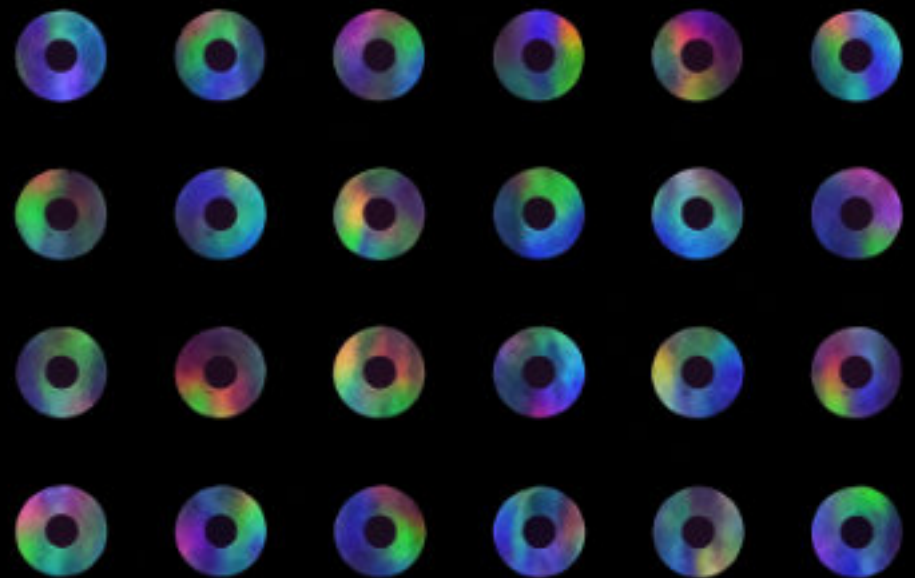


Figure 4
Partial lunar eclipse over the Hanois Lighthouse.
Image credit Nick Després.



Figure 5
Upper: the Orion Nebula and Sirius A (Bet – Betelgeuse, Bel – Bellatrix, Sai – Saiph, Rig – Rigel, and Sir – Sirius A).
Image credit Trevor Mahy.

Lower: a series of slightly defocussed Sirius A photographs showing atmospheric scintillation. Image credit Martin Sarre.



Sirius A

Have you noticed how stars in the night sky twinkle? It is not the stars themselves but the effect of turbulence within the Earth's atmosphere. Starlight is bent as it passes through pockets of varying temperatures and densities of air, which is called atmospheric scintillation.

This is particularly noticeable for Sirius A, which is the brightest star in the night sky. The name is derived from the Greek word Seirios, which means "glowing" or "scorching". For our latitude, the effect is further enhanced as Sirius A sits relatively low in the sky and thus, the layer of atmosphere the light must pass through is dimensionally thicker.

Sirius A is a winter/spring star that is 8.6 light-years distance from Earth. It is a main sequence star of spectral type-A, which means it is a white to bluish-white star. Yet on nights when the atmosphere is unstable, it can appear as a myriad of different colours that can be seen easily with the naked eye. This is further enhanced if viewed through slightly defocussed optics, as in this case, taken with a 2-metre focal length Schmidt-Cassegrain. The upper image shows the Orion Nebula and Sirius A and the lower image a series of slightly defocussed Sirius A photographs showing atmospheric scintillation. The circle in the middle is the shadow of the secondary mirror.



Figure 6
Aurora Borealis from Ladies Bay, 16th April 2025.
Image Credit Martin Sarre

Bat Section

The Bailiwick Bat Survey has finished after four years, and in the process "completely changing the understanding of bats across the Bailiwick of Guernsey".

In 2020, little was known about the bats within the Bailiwick of Guernsey. To address this, a joint initiative involving ACLMS, La Société Guernesaise, La Société Sercquaise, the Alderney Wildlife trust and the British Trust for Ornithology was created to support the recording effort. Volunteers were given the opportunity to borrow sound recording equipment which were deployed for up to seven nights.

The sound recordings were then uploaded to the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Acoustic Pipeline for analysis, providing initial results within hours.

Since the start of the Bailiwick Bat Survey in 2021, the citizen science-based approach has helped 420 volunteers to conduct more than 9,000 nights of recording 2,364 different locations, with 16 million triggered sound recordings have been collected.

This has resulted in more than four million bat identifications being made, and 14 different bat species have been confirmed to live here in the Bailiwick, including six bat species never previously recorded in the Bailiwick.

Following a process of manual species validation, the study confirmed the presence of at least 14 bat species, 5 small mammal species, and 7 species of bush-crickets. This included 6 bat species that had not previously been recorded on any island in the Bailiwick

of Guernsey, including Serotine, Leisler's Bat, Common Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Whiskered Bat and Parti-coloured Bat. The citizen science-based approach, meant over 400 volunteers, many of whom were new to biological recording used acoustics and machine-learning techniques over four survey seasons, from 2021 to 2024, at 2,364 different locations across the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

In addition to bats, the recordings helped to describe and identify bat social calls and feeding buzzes, providing additional behavioural insights on bats.

The study also found that underground tunnels from the German occupation in WWII were particularly important roosting and hibernation sites for several of the scarcer species of bats in the islands, and were also found to provide sites where swarming occurred in Autumn. A more detailed analysis, looking at habitat association, comparison to island topology and other factors, is being worked on.

Over its lifespan the Bailiwick Bat Survey has helped improve Guernsey's understanding of the status, distribution and timing of occurrence of our bat, bush-cricket and small mammal species.

It's helped get involve and inspire a large section of the wider community to connect and engage with an aspect of nature that is poorly known and understood.

Plus it's helped develop a community awareness of what bats do for us, what they require, why it is important to conserve them, and how landowners and householders can enhance their properties for bats.

The bat group continue to visually monitor a small number of known bat roosts, with dusk roost counts. We are a small group, but friendly, and always happy to welcome new members who would like to find out more about these fascinating animals, or who want to get involved in some practical ecology. Please get in touch with us at bats@societe.org.gg



Laura Harrison
Bat Section



The Bailiwick Bat Survey, **Anthony Ford-Marsland**



Glanville Fritillary, **Andy Marquis**

Entomology Section

The last few months have seen insect life start to awaken further and our moth traps are beginning to show more variety, as well as insects in the field being more visible. The weather has finally warmed up enough to get things moving, so we start to record.

As always, I welcome reports and photographs of any invertebrates which can be included in future reports. Please email entomology@societe.org.gg

12th May was the 2025 Guernsey Bioblitz. Thanks go out to all those who helped out and to Entomology Section members for their assistance in setting up the traps, identifying everything and packing away after.

It was a very wet evening for setting up the moth traps, and everything needed to dry out at home for a few days afterwards!

Moth traps were powered using the Section's new generator and field equipment, for the first time, which proved to be very successful (thank you to Council for approving these purchases). The four moth traps running all night around the headland attracted 74 species of moth, which is an excellent count. Two more species were found in the day, Oak Eggar and Dingy Footman caterpillars. The moths included species which aren't often seen in gardens such as Broom Moth, Mullein Moth, Pale Prominent and several others show the importance of being able to trap in differing habitats, which the generator allows us to do more readily. We even had Painted Lady and Wall butterflies in the moth traps, which were spread evenly around the headland centred around Tower no 5.

The total land invertebrate count was 129 species which, as well as moths, included 11 species of butterfly, 5 woodlice and 4 ant species. We also recorded species from the Hymenoptera, Hemiptera and Orthoptera orders amongst others.

One species new to the Channel Islands is the thrip (order *Thysanoptera*), *Aeolothrips intermedius*. They are common in the South of the UK and Europe so this is simply a case of no-one working with this order in the past and looking to identify them using a microscope.

My garden traps have also started to get busier. I was lucky enough to trap a stunning Tawny-barred Angle last week, photo included, such a stunning moth.

So far this year, Odonata seem to be doing well. Reports of several species around the island including Blue-tailed Damselfly, Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor Dragonfly, Red-veined Darter (showing evidence of breeding at La Grande Mare).

The cliffs are alive with insects at the moment with many species of shieldbug, beetle and bees amongst the flowers, well worth a walk.

The Rothamsted trap caught the Crane fly *Cheilotricha cinerascens* in early March which is a new species to Guernsey.

Hopefully, we can look forward to a busy summer season.

Andy Marquis
Section Secretary



Nomada integra, Andy Marquis

Broom Moth, Andy Marquis



Andrena haemorrhoa, Andy Marquis



Juniors

Our 2025 Junior events kicked off in April with our annual spring beach clean. This year we decided to head to L'Eree Bay. The rubbish collected included lots of small bits of plastic called nurdles, a lone sock, carrier bags, fishing wire, fishing weights, glass, plastic bottles, cans and food wrappers but the biggest culprit was cigarette butts - in less than an hour we collected 194 - an astonishing amount! In total, 2.79kg of litter was removed from our marine environment, before it could be taken out to sea helping to reduce the threat to marine animals and preserve our environment.

In May, our Junior event was a collaboration with the Historic Buildings Section. Our group was treated to an incredible event by the section's secretary Callum Tostevin-Hall at Les Caches Farm. Callum showcased aspects of Guernsey's vernacular architecture to our younger members who were enamoured by his knowledge, as he demonstrated just how fascinating buildings can be. Les Caches Farm is a collection of fine Guernsey farmhouses and outbuildings dating from the 15th Century to mid-19th Century, nestled amongst pastures in the peaceful hamlet of Les Villets in the Forest parish. We hope to do another event with Callum in the future, hopefully at one of the fortifications on the island so keep your eyes peeled for this event. Thank you again to Callum for his enthusiasm and fascinating talk.

We have a jam-packed diary of events planned for the rest of the year with at least one junior event coming up each

month, all of which cover a wide variety of different interests and topics relating to the environment and nature conservation.

If you are interested in joining the mailing list or have any suggestions as to what sort of events you'd like to see in the future, 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 Officer



The cigarettes collected in one hour on the junior beach clean at L'Eree Bay, **Emma Boughey**



Some of the rubbish collected by our Junior members from the beach clean.

Upcoming junior events for 2025:

More events may be included at a later date which will be added to the events emails and our website.

- Sunday 8th June – World Oceans Day Screening, in collaboration with the Marine Biology Section and the Nature Commission, 2:00pm – 3:00pm at the Sir Charles Frossard Lecture Theatre. This event will showcase films of our amazing local marine life!
- Saturday 12th July – Crab Surveying, 2:00pm – 3:30pm, at Portelet Bay. Join us and help us survey some of the local crab population.
- Sunday 3rd August – Bird ringing demonstration, 10:00am – 11:00am, at Bordeaux Mound. Come along and see some wild birds up close!
- Saturday 9th August – 'Search for the Plant Invaders' with Guernsey Conservation Volunteers, 2:00pm – 3:00pm, at Rocquaine. Help us by removing sour fig shoots (an invasive, non-native plant) from our environment.
- Saturday 13th September – Migratory Bird Walk, 9:00am – 10:30am, at Vale Pond. Come along and learn more about our local bird life!
- Sunday 21st September – Dolphin Surveying, 10:30am – 11:30am, at the Bathing Pools. Pop along and join us throughout the morning as we survey for dolphins.



Our Junior event at Les Caches Farm led by Callum Tostevin-Hall, photo by **Emma Boughey**

- Alongside our Marine Biology Section Secretary and Education team, learn how to survey dolphins, the species we have in the Bailiwick, what they eat and how we can best look after them.
- Monday 27th October – 'Autumn Crafts' drop in, 10:00am – 11:30am, La Société office, Candie Gardens. Join us in half term to make some crafts to take home to help our local wildlife.
- Saturday 6th December – Eco-friendly Wreath Making Workshops, Workshop 1 – 10:30 – 11:30; Workshop 2 – 12:15 – 13:15; Workshop 3 – 14:00 – 15:00, La Société office, Candie Gardens.

Marine Biology Section

Thanks to the fantastic spate of weather during April and May the marine section has had an exciting few months of events including:

- April Dolphin watch & Coffee Catchup - Sunday 27th April
- Rockpool ramble and seagrass walkover - Sunday 27th April
- Boat based seal Survey - Monday 28th April
- Marine protected area presentation evening with Blue Marine Foundation - Wednesday 14th May
- Seasearch training and activities week – led by Jessi Jennings and Charlotte Bolton 12th – 18th May
- Tour of Guernsey Sea Farms - Tuesday 27th May

Marine mammal surveys have got off to a good start through the combination of boat based seal surveys, and shore based dolphin watches. During the public watch on Sunday at Jerbourg headland we were delighted to have 25 attendees helping out.



23 Harbour Porpoise off Telegraph bay (Jerbourg Point) Julien Bougourd April 27

While we did not encounter any bottlenoses or rissos, eagle-eyed watchers did spot a harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* as it swam beyond Telegraph bay. Thanks to Julien Bougourd for managing to capture footage of this animal; while fairly common to the south coast, Harbour Porpoise are extremely shy and tricky to photograph. Alongside the shore-based watch, we also had a very fruitful survey of the seals on the Herm Humps Ramsar site. From January to April Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* tend to congregate in their highest numbers to haul out and undergo their annual moult. Our April survey count verified this, with a total of 54 seals counted, which will very likely be the highest number we see this year.

Many thanks to the public and La Société volunteers who helped with both of these survey events, alongside a big thanks to Seascope Ltd and the Sailing Trust for helping with the boat organisation, and ACLMS and The Nature Commission for providing grants towards these monitoring efforts.

Spotlight on Marine protected areas.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a tried and tested conservation and fisheries management technique which has been used throughout coastal and offshore waters to improve and recover biodiversity (and commercial fish stock) within the marine environment. Guernsey's Bailiwick does not have any protection measures of this nature in place – yet – however there are multiple examples of MPA networks in place in the UK, Jersey and further afield to draw on for inspiration, in the hope that we may follow suit in the future.

We were therefore delighted to have the Blue Marine Foundation, a charity dedicated to the implementation of effective MPAs, visiting the island presenting a few of these examples as part of a public presentation and lecture in April. Dr Jean Luc Solandt and Freddie Watson, both of Blue Marine foundation, presented to a full Frossard Theatre audience, on the stories of what makes

MPAs effective, and how the UK and Jersey have progressed thus far. The audience was also able to see some sneak preview clips from David Attenborough's upcoming "Oceans" film, which is out in Cinemas. Jean Luc was also kind enough to add in a review of his own on Guernsey Island experiences from his visit around the Bailiwick.



Freddie Watson, Blue Marine Foundation, Presenting on MPAs and Jersey

Seasearch updates

Seasearch has had an extremely busy April and May, with several intertidal surveys in the south west corner of Herm, L'Ancrese East and Salarie Corner, leading to a full week of training by Charlotte Bolton for already qualified observers. With 60+ individuals on the island now trained as observers with Seasearch, the next steps focus not necessarily on recruiting new volunteers, but

on maintaining and upskilling the trained cohort and continuing to collect data from around Guernsey's waters. Therefore some of the more tricky groups to identify to species (or even just family) level were given a spotlight this May; groups including inshore fishes, tunicates and seaweeds. Hopefully all the new knowledge and insights from training can be quickly used in the field for upcoming snorkel and dives surveys as we move into the season of warmer waters and (theoretically) more reliable weather.

Visiting the Channel Islands – once again. 15 years on for a marine conservationist

It's with great pleasure to report – briefly – on a welcoming and inspirational trip to the Channel Islands for me. (The weather helped). I've visited both Bailiwicks in previous years, to report on both basking shark research in the mid-2000s, attendance at a couple of Inter-Island Environment Meetings (Jersey and Alderney) in more recent pre-COVID years. Most relevant to the objectives of Blue Marine Foundation was a mini tour with Dr Tom Hooper of (then) 'Finding Sanctuary' SW English MPA project in 2009 to introduce the then pending MPA designation projects in the UK to Jersey and Guernsey.

Much has changed since I was here with Dr Hooper in 2009: In the mainland UK, after 10 years of effort, England finally designated its last tranche of MPAs in 2019 that has resulted in 92 additional MPAs for England, with four MCZs in the much smaller area of seas around Northern Ireland. Scotland designated a network of 30 MPAs more efficiently in 2014. However, whilst Scotland is remiss in putting in effectual / actual protection from damaging fishing in the vast majority of its sites, England set about implementing a cost-effective systematic approach to protecting its MPAs from bottom towed fishing gears since 2013. Scallop dredging, beam and otter trawling (all forms of fishing that drag heavy equipment across the seafloor causing collateral damage of habitats) have been banned, or partially banned for much of the Marine Protected Areas. I was part of that journey with many

other dedicated individuals inside and outside government, advising, recommending and pushing for expansive protection measures. We now have over 20,000km square closed to that form of fishing in inshore (<12nm) and offshore waters, with more to come.

In Guernsey we met with Jessi Jennings, CEO of the Nature Commission to discuss what Marine Protected Areas might look like. We noted that there is very little scallop dredging and trawling in Guernsey and Sark waters. However, there are other areas in which MPAs are relevant in controlling bycatch of species, reducing impacts from development, and mitigation of damage from some essential developments for society (such as large-scale offshore wind) with habitat protection and enhancement being a logical requirement paid for & supported by windfarm developers within windfarm locations (as is the case in the Netherlands).

We also met with Sue Daly and her partner Andy of Sark. Sue is a naturalist, sailor, author, photographer and dive instructor. They described how Sark manages its fisheries sustainably to limit the amount of static gear fishing and has only a fraction of its seas towed by trawlers, and only allows for scallop diving with no dredging permitted within 3 miles of the island. Sark could indeed be regarded now as a de facto environmental heritage site on land and sea and is better managed than many UK Marine Protected Areas.



All aboard with Sue Daly



Portelet bay (Jersey) training with FreddieWatson and Beckie Scaife

In Jersey we were delighted to be hosted by our partners the National Trust for Jersey and Société Jersiaise. We were welcomed at meetings introducing the new National Trust for Jersey Strategy, and had the pleasure of visiting their Grève de Lecq site, that will have a focus on marine interpretation and active use. The vision of Alan Le Maister (CEO of the Jersey NT) for the centre is fully aligned with that of

Blue Marine Foundation, to educate and inform; an essential part of the picture to developing a resilient and well-supported Marine Protected Area network. I had the privilege of sitting down with Paul Chambers, former Director of Marine Resources, after my talk at the Société to discuss the narrative of the passage of the new post Bay of Granville fisheries agreement with France, leading to a new paradigm that puts in place the potential for fit-for-purpose management of fisheries between that will result in longer-term sustainable fishing. Congratulations of the highest order must be offered to the work behind this new relationship.

We also visited an annual University of Portsmouth Coastal and Marine Resource Management Masters field trip at Portelet Bay and did our very own snorkel safari after my colleagues Freddie Watson and Beckie Scaife provided information on Blue Marine Foundation's commitment to local conservation. This inspired me (the lecture and snorkel), as I don't get wet that often. To have 18-inch bass and a plethora of mating and feeding sea hares all around was exciting, as were the

beautiful comb jellyfish that scattered the light spectrum throughout the water column during our hour-long sojourn in the azure waters. It could have been the Mediterranean (apart from the tide).

So what have I learned? Having exciting, well-connected Blue Marine colleagues (Freddie Watson, Kathryn Smith and Beckie Scaife) on board to progress and support measures as they finally develop in Jersey is essential for throughput of government and National Trust visions. Clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas were a vision of the 2010 UK government that led to such an improvement in management. We're very close with the incipient MPAs in Jersey (they're on paper, but not as yet in law), whilst Sark has everything in place to be called a de facto MPA.

I believe that Islands are where the magic lies in the field of Marine Conservation – things can happen very fast, with a supportive population. Over 80% of the respondents in a recent poll in Jersey wanted to see enhanced marine conservation for the island. It's so very heartening for this 55 year-old conservationist to see so much progress to marine protection in the Channel Islands: For the long-term security of people and wildlife. As Sir David Attenborough says in the current 'Ocean' film. If we save the Seas, we save ourselves.

Jean-Luc Solandt, Senior Project Manager, Blue Marine Foundation



Ornithology Section

Bird News

Spring migration this year has been slow, mainly due to persistent northeasterly winds in March and the first part of April. It has also been a dry spring, which has made life very difficult for our birdlife across the UK. Numbers of swallows are reportedly down and, if possible, it is a good idea to create a muddy patch in your garden for these birds to use for their nests. Also, a water source in the garden is invaluable—whether it is a birdbath, a small pond, or something larger. This is also beneficial for insects. Numbers of insects are down significantly from recent years, and with fewer insects, there will be fewer birds.

The arrival of Northern Wheatear is keenly anticipated by birdwatchers because it shows that spring is on the way. The first two were seen on 10th March at Jaonneuse (DC). In the following days, good numbers came into the island and were seen along the west coast, at Pleinmont, and on the cliffs. They are a passage migrant, only stopping off in Guernsey for a few days to feed up before heading off to Northern Europe and the northern part of the UK, where they breed. They have bred in Guernsey in the past, but the last probable record was a few years ago. However, it is interesting to note that there appeared to be a long-staying pair near Pleinmont up to at least 1st May (WRT). Other sightings of Wheatear in May were probably the subspecies Greenland Wheatear. They come

through later, as their breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland still have cold weather in March and early April. Timing for them is crucial.



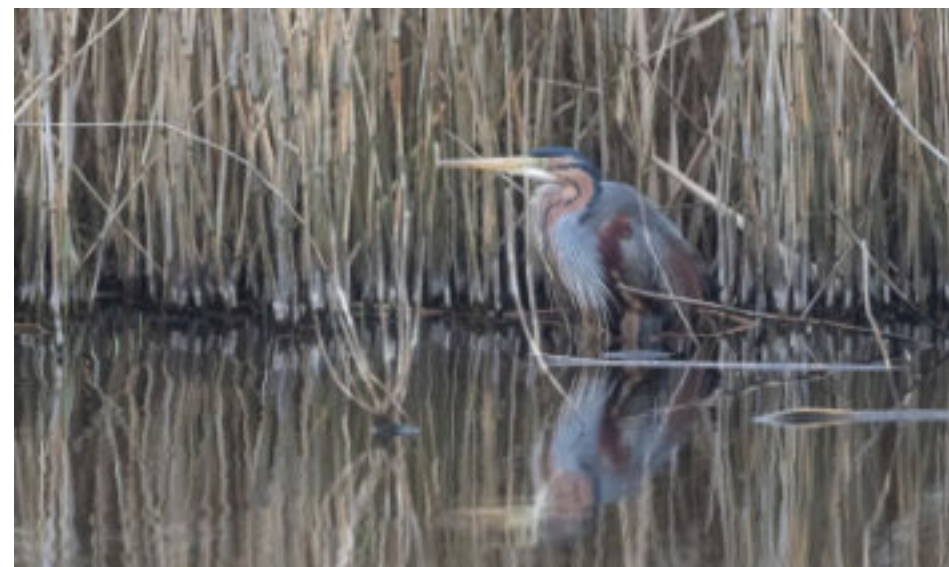
Northern Wheatear, *Kim Wilkinson*

A pair of overwintering Great Crested Grebes built a nest in late winter and went on to lay four eggs. Three hatched in the third week of March. Two have survived and are growing on well. This is a first breeding record for this species in the Channel Islands, and many people have been able to enjoy good views of the 'humbugs'. Initially, they spend time on their parents' backs where they are protected but are now more independent. They are water birds, rarely coming to land, as their legs are set so far back that walking is almost impossible.

Members of the heron family continue to do well around the island, with frequent sightings of Cattle Egret reported from Guernsey. Twenty-eight were seen together in Rue du Hechet on 25th March (WRT). There have been several records of Great White Egret at multiple sites. It was first seen at Perelle on 9th April (APL). Four were seen at L'Eree on 28th April (MAG).



Great White Egret, *Christopher Wilkinson*



Purple Heron, *Julie Davis*

A rarer visitor was a Purple Heron at Le Grand Pré. It was first reported on 18th March (APL) and stayed until at least 7th April.

Work to restore wet areas in this reserve has paid off, with more wetland birds being reported. There has also been an increase in the number of

damselflies and other insects, which will make the area more attractive to birds. Migrant birds using the reserve this spring included: Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, and Spotted Flycatcher. Swallows, House Martins, and Sand Martins are feeding over the wet areas. The first Swallow was reported on 17th March at Cobo (MPL).

We still have a few winter visitors hanging on. Brent Geese has been reported from Perelle and, presumably two non-breeders, were seen just off the east coast of Herm on 13th May (JD). On the same visit, a probable Kentish Plover was seen and I have truly learned my lesson always to carry a decent camera. A written description has been sent to the Rarities Committee and I live in hope!

There were unverified reports of a very rare Black Kite at Rue des Grons in March, and again on 9th April. One was recorded at various sites around the island on 16th May and can be confirmed because it was photographed by Dave Carré.

Even rarer was the record of a Bluethroat at La Claire Mare on 23rd March (MCS et al). Photo by Jamie Hooper from 2013.



Bluethroat, *Jamie Hooper*



Black Kite, *Dave Carré*

Another rarity was a Bee-eater at Pleinmont on 28th April (JH). Probably a second bird was seen at Les Tielles, coming in off the sea on 10th May (MAG).

Recorders

- DC Dave Carré
- JD Julie Davis
- JH Jamie Hooper
- APL Anthony Loaring
- MPL Mark Lawlor
- MAG Mark Guppy
- MCS Mary Simmons
- WRT Wayne Turner

Section News

The Section continues to support several surveys for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

The Breeding Bird Survey has volunteers walking allocated squares twice every spring. The Wetland Bird Survey is well-covered. Volunteers take on a section of the east and west coasts and undertake a monthly count of the various species that are seen.

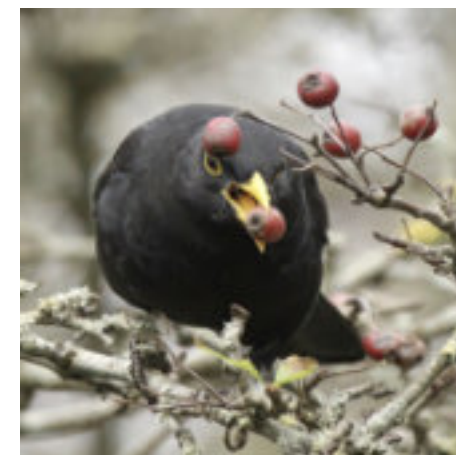
This year we have taken on seven allocated squares to carry out a Heathland Bird Survey, which is ongoing until the end of June. The squares include areas on the cliff, at L'Ancrese and on Herm. The focus species is Dartford Warbler. One was seen at Pleinmont on 5th April. There are hopes that Dartfords will re-establish themselves as a breeding species. They were present until a series of cold winters wiped them out in the 1980s. Since then, they mainly come through Guernsey on passage. The survey has flagged up fewer Linnets and Stonechats than expected.

The BTO Garden Birdwatch has been well-publicised by La Société and the Guernsey Nature Commission has we have attracted a few more volunteers to submit a weekly record of birds from their garden. We really do need more people to do this and you don't need to have lots of birds.

More recently, the BTO have also asked

people to volunteer for Blackbirds in Gardens. If you already do the Garden Birdwatch, this is an easy add-on. Since 2020, mosquitoes carrying Usutu virus (originally from Africa) have arrived in southern England. The virus is low risk to humans but Blackbirds are susceptible. The BTO wants to know how they are doing in our gardens and why their population is declining in some areas. If you would like to help, the link is: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/blackbirds-gardens>

Julie Davis
Section Secretary



Blackbird, *Ian Le Page*

Honorary Treasurer Vacancy

After seven years as La Societe's Honorary Treasurer (HT), Dave Christopher will be stepping down in September. Dave has prepared a description of his responsibilities which you can find attached to this short email. This gives a brief overview of the role that the HT plays in an organisation such as ours.

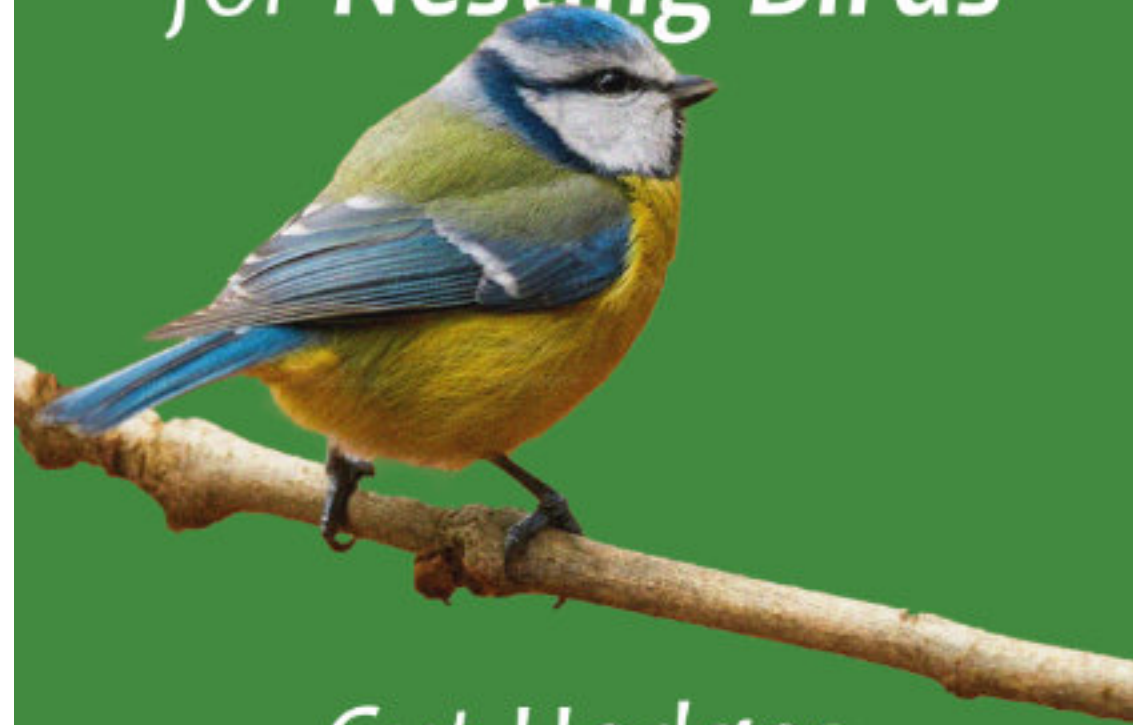
If you would like to apply for this position or would like further details then please contact either of the following:-

treasurer@societe.org.gg

president@societe.org.gg

Secretary@societe.org.gg

Critical Time for Nesting Birds



Cut Hedges with Care



BIRD NESTING SEASON



A guide to hedge cutting

The June cut between 1 and 15 June is required by law. It is also a legal requirement not knowingly to disturb nesting birds.

- Earth banks with native hedging are part of Guernsey's traditional landscape.
- They host many species of plants which give food and shelter to birds, insects and small mammals.
- Together with non-native hedging, they can be used by nesting birds

LSG recommends

- Check the hedge before cutting.
- Where there are nesting birds, if possible, lightly cut back the surrounding roadside growth by hand.
- Leave the cut of the inside of the hedge until the end of August, to reduce disturbance.
- Leave 100mm or 4 inches of vegetation on a bank. Cutting back to bare earth can cause erosion.



La Société
For nature, history and science in Guernsey

Find out more about how LSG supports the island's biodiversity societe.org.gg/vsp



Environment Guernsey
Environmental contracting & consulting

Environment Guernsey is the wholly owned company of La Société Guernesiaise

We provide an environmental consultancy services, 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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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.

Our office at Candie will be open on **Wednesday** and **Saturday** from **10.00 to 13.00**.
La Société Guernesaise, Candie Gardens, St Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 1UG

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Projects

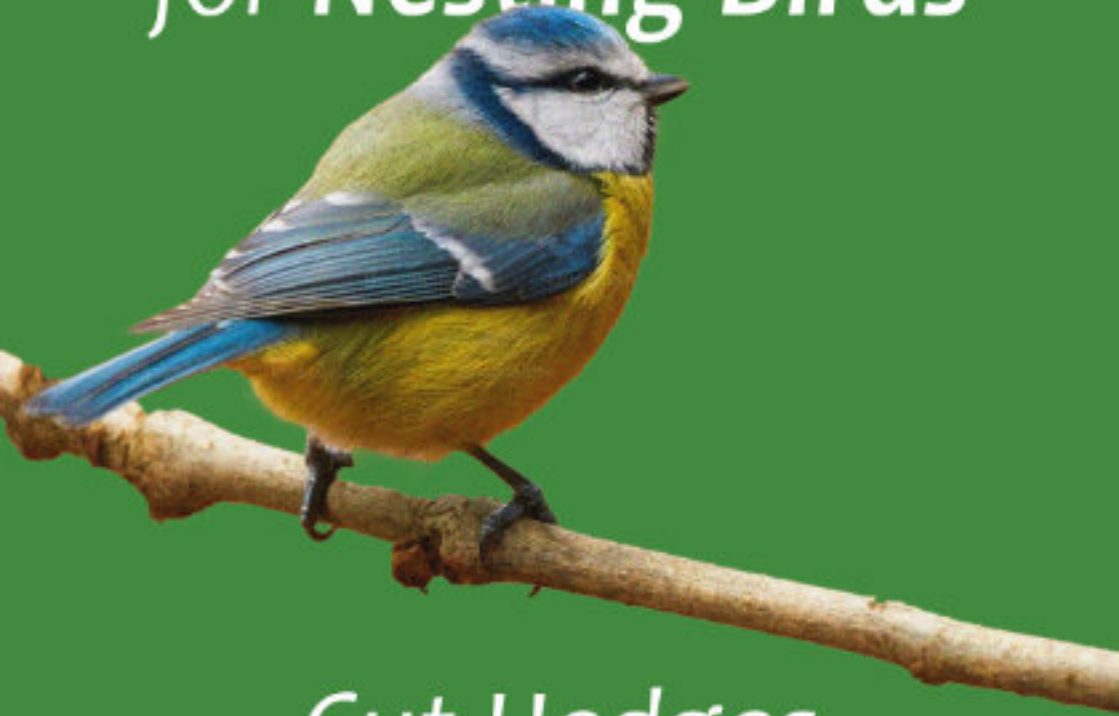
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Jessi Jennings, Angela Salmon,
Robert Roue and Elaine Mahy.

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Critical Time for Nesting Birds



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