



*Dear Garden  
Birdwatch Participant,*

A very warm welcome to the December edition of your Garden Birdwatch update, including a brief roundup of Manx BirdLife news from this year.

Firstly, I'd like to introduce myself as Manx BirdLife's new Garden

Birdwatch Coordinator and Education Officer. I was delighted to join the team following Nicky Howard's departure. Nicky and her family are now settled into their new life in England, and Nicky has asked me to pass on her very best wishes to you.

I am greatly enjoying my own new challenges in running both the young people's education programme and the garden birdwatch scheme provided by Manx BirdLife to the Isle of Man's very special community.

### Garden birdwatch scheme

Thank you to everyone taking part in the scheme and for sending us your period 3 observations. The information you provide helps us to understand the fortunes of our garden birds here on the island. Your sightings add to the picture being compiled across the British Isles – helping conservationists to measure the health of the wider natural environment. You'll find a summary of recent garden birdwatch sightings in this update.

### Celebrating Manx Birds

The inaugural *Celebrating Manx Birds* conference was held in early November at the Manx Museum. A joint Manx Ornithological Society and Manx Birdlife production, it was a great success with 200 participants. If you were unable to attend, you can read a brief report on the event below.

### Looking forward to winter!

As the cloak of winter descends, we bring you news of some very special winter visitors. These are certainly worth watching out for in your garden amongst the berries and fallen fruit. Of course, we look forward to all reports of birds – common and rare – in your garden this winter. And if you take any photographs, please send them for our consideration for the next update.

I do hope you will enjoy reading this brief report. As for me, I look forward to hearing from you – or even better, meeting you when I am out and about around the island. Meantime, happy garden birdwatching!

*Michelle Storton*

## Garden Birdwatch Top Ten (Period 3)

Position Period 3 2016			Position Period 3 2015
1	↔	House Sparrow	1
2	↔	European Robin	2
3	↑	Eurasian Jackdaw	6
4	↓	Common Blackbird	3
5	↔	Blue Tit	5
6= 6=	↑ ↓	Eurasian Collared Dove Great Tit	7 4
7	↓	Chaffinch	6
8	↔	Black-billed Magpie	8
9	↔	European Goldfinch	9
10= 10=	↔ ↓	Common Starling Woodpigeon	10 -

In period 3 (Sep-Nov) 2016, 52 different species were recorded by 70 observers. This compares to 57 different species by 67 observers for the same period in 2015.



Winter male house Sparrow © Neil G Morris

this species across the British Isles, it is now 'red-listed' as a species of great conservation concern.



Willow Warbler © Neil G Morris

Man garden birdwatcher this autumn, an excellent record of this beautiful songster which spends winter in the sub-Saharan regions of central Africa!

The House Sparrow was the commonest garden bird seen during period 3 of 2016's garden birdwatch survey. However, as a result of recent declines in the populations of

The Willow Warbler is a summer visitor to the island and one of our least reported garden birds. But a very late lingering migrant was seen by an eagle-eyed Isle of

## Coming to your garden soon ... possibly!

As winter gets into full swing, look out for these very special garden visitors.



Redwing © Neil G Morris

The Redwing is a common winter visitor from Scandinavia and Russia. It is the smallest true thrush to be seen on the Isle of Man. Often seen with Fieldfare, travelling in mixed flocks, it feeds on winter berries.



Fieldfare © Neil G Morris

Fieldfares are large thrushes known for their chuckling call. They're often found in the company of Redwings. Good numbers of Fieldfares and Redwings have already been noted around the island this winter.



Waxwing © Neil G Morris

The Waxwing is a rare bird in the Isle of Man. But it has already been reported in large flocks across the UK this winter – so now's as good a time as any to find this exotic species feeding on berries in our gardens.



### MOS sponsorship

Since September, the Garden Birdwatch Scheme has been sponsored by the Manx Ornithological Society. We are very grateful for this support which covers the cost of printing the quarterly count sheets.

### Thank you to our volunteers

We'd also like to say a big thank you to our regular volunteers – Jenny Shanley, David Dunn and Carolyn Rawson – who come into the Manx BirdLife office every week to help enter your garden birdwatch sightings onto the database. We now have more than seven million records of bird sightings from the island on the database!

### Send us your stories

One of our fantastic volunteers had the idea of 'reader's stories'. We agree that this would be a fantastic addition to this regular update. We're sure you'll have stories to tell about the antics of the birds in your garden. Perhaps you've had a special visitor that you'd like to tell us about. Why not send your story (no more than one side of A4 please) with your next count form – and let others enjoy knowing what you have seen and experienced during your garden birdwatch observations.

### 2016 sightings and rarities

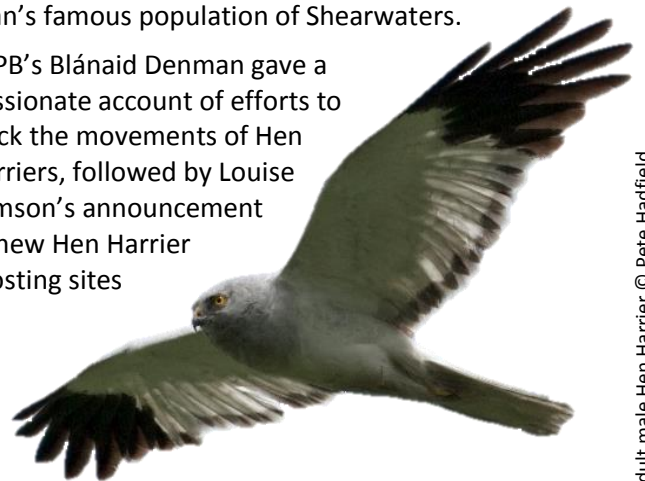
Since 1<sup>st</sup> July, nearly 800 sightings have been submitted to the new Manx BirdLife website. Along with expected species – such as Wren, Grey Heron, Mallard and Goldfinch, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Golden Plover, Kestrel – there have been exciting rarities such as Little Egret, Purple Sandpiper, Wryneck and even the tiny Asian Yellow-browed Warbler. You can report all your sightings from around the island via the easy-to-use online form at [www.manxbirdlife.im/sightings/submit-your-sightings](http://www.manxbirdlife.im/sightings/submit-your-sightings).

### Celebrating Manx Birds

A capacity audience enjoyed an afternoon of gentle science and discovery at the Manx Museum on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. in the company of local and overseas speakers.

Ollie Padget from Oxford University revealed how Manx Shearwaters navigate, sharing dramatic footage from a camera carried by an ocean-wandering Shearwater, while Kate Hawkins described the fall and rise of the Calf of Man's famous population of Shearwaters.

RSPB's Blánaid Denman gave a passionate account of efforts to track the movements of Hen Harriers, followed by Louise Samson's announcement of new Hen Harrier roosting sites



Adult male Hen Harrier © Pete Hadfield

being discovered on the Isle of Man.

Dr Samantha Franks shared beautiful images of the captivating Curlew and her fears for the species' survival. On a more upbeat note, Allen Moore told humorous tales of charismatic Manx Choughs and their counterparts on the island of La Palma who feed on prickly pear plants!

A great afternoon was rounded off with Dr Tim Graham describing his priorities for the Manx Wildlife Trust and the RSPB's Dr Martin Harper who told us with great conviction and passion why nature matters and what we must do to protect it for future generations.

*Huge thanks are due to the Society for the Preservation of the Manx Countryside and Environment and to Stewart Clague Services for helping to make the event possible.*

## Aalin, the tagged Manx Hen Harrier



Aalin © James Leonard

Aalin is a young female Hen Harrier born in the uplands of the Isle of Man this year. Before fledging from the nest, she was fitted with a satellite tag by James Leonard and the Manx Ringing Group. This tag and the stream of data it will provide are funded by the Society for the Preservation of the Manx Countryside and Environment.

Their chosen name, *Aalin*, is Manx

Gaelic for 'beauty'. The RSPB's Hen Harrier LIFE Project is now tracking her every move. The latest news is that, after a prolonged stay in the hills, she flew to Ramsey, then crossed the sea to Blackpool, flew past Manchester and headed west of Stoke-on-Trent.

You can follow *Aalin's* amazing adventures online by checking the news pages at [www.manxbirdlife.im](http://www.manxbirdlife.im) or by searching online (e.g. via Google) for "Aalin RSPB".

## Become a friend of Manx BirdLife



The Friends of Manx BirdLife scheme has been relaunched.

As a friend, you will be directly supporting our conservation work to save the island's wild birds and their habitats. There is much work to be done!

For more about becoming a friend, please call Neil Morris or Michelle Storton on 01624 861130. Thank you.

## Manx BirdLife Education Programme

At the end of October, Nicky Howard said her tearful final farewells to Manx BirdLife. She had thoroughly enjoyed her time here and was sad to be saying goodbye.

We can now announce that Michelle Storton has filled Nicky's boots as Education Officer and Garden Birdwatch Coordinator. Working two days a week, Michelle plans to spend as much time as possible delivering educational activities – both in and outside the classroom – to children of primary school age.

Michelle's aim is to encourage and enthuse young people to take a look outside and see what amazing birds and wildlife we have here on the Isle of Man. She hopes to raise awareness of the importance of these wild birds and their habitats, and of birds as valuable environmental indicators, supporting primary schools in delivering the national curriculum and its learning outcomes.

If you work in a school or know someone who does and you think they would welcome a visit from Manx BirdLife, please ask them to email Michelle at [education@manxbirdlife.im](mailto:education@manxbirdlife.im).



Robin in the snow © [www.cardaid.co.uk](http://www.cardaid.co.uk)

## Wishing you a merry Christmas!

On behalf of Neil and Michelle, our trustees, friends, volunteers, sponsors and partners, we wish you a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

**Good birdwatching!**

## Please make a contribution

Dear Participant,

In order for us to cover all the costs associated with the Garden Birdwatch Scheme, we ask participants to donate just £5.00. This covers, for each Garden Birdwatch participant for one year, those costs in addition to printing that are not met by the kind sponsorship of the Manx Ornithological Society. I have added the donation form below and would be most grateful if you would return this with your £5.00 annual contribution. (Please make cheques payable to 'Manx BirdLife'). Thank you, Michelle

I enclose a £5 contribution to help to cover the costs of the Garden Birdwatch Scheme

I also wish to make a further donation of £\_\_\_\_\_ towards the conservation work of Manx BirdLife

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for helping to conserve the Isle of Man's wild birds and their habitats**

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